

# SURVEY OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS 1935

## VOLUME II ABYSSINIA AND ITALY

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ὡ δημοκρατία, ποτ' προβιβῆς ἡμᾶς ποτε,  
εἰ ταῦτα γ' ἐχειροτόμηται;

ARISTOPHANES: *Birds*, 1570-1

A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land;  
the prophets prophesy falsely . . . and my people love to  
have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?

*Jeremiah*, v. 30-1

And unto the angels of the church of the Laodiceans  
write . . .

I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot:  
I would thou wert cold or hot.

So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor  
hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods,  
and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art  
wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

*Revelation*, iii. 14-17

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κεῖνοι μὲν, γυμνοὶ καὶ βάρβαροι ἄνδρες ἔόντες,  
ὄργανα φρικώδους οὐκ ἐφοβοῦντ' Ἄρεως,  
ἀλλ' αὐτοσχεδίῃ, ἔτ' ἐλεύθεροι, οὐ τι τρέσαντες,  
εἰς Ἄϊδην καλῶς μαρνάμενοι κάτεβαν.  
ἡμεῖς δ' οἱ μεγάλοι καὶ καρτεροί, οἱ σοφοί; ἡμῖν  
τῶν αὐτῶν ὀδυνῶν γευσάμενοισι θανεῖν  
μοῖρ', ἀλλ' οὐ θάνατον τὸν Ἀρήιον· οὐποτε τοῖον  
τοῖς ἐπιιορκῶσιν δῶραν ἔδωκε Θεός.

Without our arms or art, these men could dare  
War's utmost frightfulness, since men they were,  
And, in close fight, to death untrembling passed,  
Still freemen, battling nobly to the last.  
But we, whose science makes us strong and great,  
Are doomed to share the tortures of their fate,  
Yet not their soldier's grave; the gods in scorn  
Withhold that privilege from men forsworn.



## PREFACE

IN this volume an account is given of the Italo-Abyssinian conflict and its world-wide repercussions from the morrow of the signature of an Italo-Abyssinian Treaty of Friendship and Arbitration on the 2nd August, 1928, down to the 23rd September, 1936, which was the date of the decision by the Assembly of the League of Nations to allow the Ethiopian delegates to retain their seats during the current session. Within these dates the story constitutes a distinct, as well as a crucial, episode in the post-war history of international affairs; but it is not, of course, by any means 'self-contained'. On the one hand, it presupposes the history of the earlier relations between Abyssinia, Italy, France and Great Britain, which have been dealt with in previous volumes of this series, as well as the history of the reconciliation between Italy and France—at Abyssinia's expense, as it turned out—that was achieved in the Franco-Italian Pact of the 7th January, 1935; and this latter transaction is dealt with in the first volume of the *Survey* for this year. On the other hand, there is no finality at the point at which the present volume closes; for the experience of the states members of the League in their attempt to apply the Covenant to the Italo-Abyssinian conflict raised certain fundamental questions concerning the League's own function, constitution and future; and in the autumn of 1936 these questions were still pending.

The Greek verses printed on the page following the title-page were first published in *The Times*, under a letter from one of the two writers of the present volume, on the 22nd April, 1936, while the English translation printed here below them was made by Mr. G. M. Gathorne-Hardy and appeared in *The Times*, under a letter from him, on the 25th April.

These verses express without reserve the feelings and opinions of the writer of this preface—who is also the writer of all those chapters of this volume in which the story touches upon matters that are morally or politically controversial. In what follows, the writer has done his best to take account of all points of view which are relevant, and he has been particularly concerned to do justice to views that differ from his; but he will certainly not be found to have either avoided or counteracted an element of subjectivity that is inherent in all historical writing (even on subjects in which the writer's personal concern is remote—and not intimate, as it is in the present case). Any presentation of a subject presupposes a point of view; and inevitably the picture comes to be drawn in the shape and

painted in the colours in which it appears to the observer's eyes from his own angle of vision. The present writer is aware that different pictures of the subject of this volume might be produced by honest and able observers who happened to have different outlooks; and for this reason he will now try to put his readers on their guard by letting them know, before embarking on his narrative, what his own outlook is.

In the first place, the writer is an Englishman; secondly, he believes that the English political tradition, as embodied in the present British Commonwealth of Nations, is a thing of great value for the World; thirdly, he believes that the British Commonwealth cannot survive except within the framework of an effective international régime of collective security of the kind intended in the Covenant of the League of Nations; fourthly, he believes that, in the international crisis of 1935-6, 'the honour and vital interests' of his country (to use the old-fashioned phrase) alike demanded of the United Kingdom that she should carry out her obligations under the Covenant completely, whatever the consequences; fifthly, he considers that this standard of conduct has not been lived up to in the foreign policy which has actually been pursued by the United Kingdom Government in the international transactions that are recorded in this volume; and, lastly (to complete the tale of contentious points in his position), he considers that the shortcomings—as they appear to him—of the actual conduct of British foreign policy in this ordeal have been due to a lack of courage and of sincerity. On the last of these points, his feelings are aptly expressed in the following words of an eminent Victorian:

As to fighting, keep out of it if you can, by all means. When the time comes, if it ever should, that you have to say 'Yes' or 'No' to a challenge to fight, say 'No' if you can—only take care you make it clear to yourselves why you say 'No'. It's a proof of the highest courage if done from true Christian motives. It's quite right and justifiable if done from a simple aversion to physical pain and danger. But don't say 'No' because you fear a licking and say or think it's because you fear God, for that's neither Christian nor honest. And, if you do fight, fight it out and don't give in while you can stand and see.<sup>1</sup>

If the readers of the present volume bear in mind that it has been written by some one with the outlook indicated above, they will have in their hands the key for transposing the picture into other perspectives.

This preliminary warning is perhaps the more necessary in this

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Hughes: *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, Part II, chap. 5, 'The Fight', *ad fin.* The whole chapter is much to the point.

case because a considerable part of this volume is occupied by an account of the domestic political and moral controversy which the international crisis arising out of the Italo-Abyssinian conflict precipitated in the United Kingdom. It is the practice in this *Survey of International Affairs* to bring into the picture the internal affairs of any of the sixty or seventy countries on the contemporary international stage when—though only when—some consideration of these seems to be essential to a proper understanding of the international drama. In previous volumes this practice has led to the inclusion, from time to time, of chapters dealing with the internal affairs of a number of countries: Morocco, Egypt, Syria, Palestine, China, Mexico, Japan, Germany, 'Irāq. This time Great Britain happens to be the country whose internal affairs enter into the action on the international arena; and the history of British public feeling and opinion in regard to the Italo-Abyssinian conflict could hardly be ignored by any one who was attempting to handle the subject—whatever his nationality. In spite, therefore, of the inconvenience of his happening to be an Englishman himself, the present writer has found it necessary to grapple with this English topic in the present volume. It will be evident, however, that in the writing of this second volume of the *Survey for 1935* a mood of judicial aloofness must be as difficult to maintain for an Englishman as it would be for an Italian—or as it would have been for a Frenchman in writing the *Survey for 1924*, or for a Chinese or a Japanese in writing the *Survey for 1931*.

In the spelling of the East African personal names and place-names, which are numerous in this volume, it has been found impossible to follow any consistent system of representation in the Latin alphabet. Many of the place-names are derived from languages which have never yet been reduced to writing; and even if an official Amharan version of a Galla or Somali name existed, and were to be found written or printed in the Ethiopic alphabet, it might have little scientific value. The spelling actually used in *A Handbook of Abyssinia*, vol. i, General (London, 1917, published by H.M. Stationery Office), has been followed as far as possible, while for names not mentioned there (and these are the great majority) an arbitrary choice of the spelling that looks simplest to an English-reading eye has been made among the variants offered by official documents and newspapers in several different European languages.

ARNOLD J. TOYNBEE.

October 1936.

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# ABYSSINIA AND ITALY

## (i) Introduction

THE tragic episode of international history which is recorded in this volume is a tale of sin and nemesis. Even at the moment of writing, on the very morrow of the events, the historian could offer this bald interpretation of the plot with some confidence that his reading of its outlines would not be disputed either by contemporary participants and observers or by a yet unborn Posterity. There was, however, perhaps room for some difference of opinion in the identification of the actors who were impersonating—beneath the conventional tragic mask—the stock characters of hero and villain and victim.

Was the play that was being performed in the arena of the ocumenical amphitheatre in A.D. 1935-6 a tragedy in the Ancient Greek style, with a single soul—raised by Fate to a pinnacle of power—seen succumbing to the sin of *hybris* and being overtaken by the nemesis of *atê*? If this was the play, then the protagonist could only be Benito Mussolini. Or was it rather a tragedy in the vein of a modern Western Society which was relapsing into the collectivism of the ant-heap and the beehive? If that was the deeper meaning of this awful spectacle, then the little men—Mussolinis and Laval and Hoares and Baldwins—who were wearing the masks and buskins, executing the gestures and speaking the lines on the stage, were mere mannikin-puppets, like the Bagrations and Napoleons of Tolstoy's *War and Peace* or Hardy's *The Dynasts*. The true protagonist, on this view, would be, not the soul of Benito Mussolini, but the Society of Western Christendom, and the sin which was evoking nemesis would be, not the personal *hybris* of an individual, but the social *karma* of the Old Adam—a heritage of Original Sin which had been accumulating through many generations.

Was it, then, the Romagnol dictator or the Great Society of a Westernized World that was the true protagonist in this performance of a traditional plot? If the historian were the Duce's confessor, it would evidently be his duty to regard the whole vast transaction as the personal action of Signor Mussolini; and from this angle of vision the Duce's decision (whenever it was taken)<sup>1</sup> to launch Italy upon a war of aggression against Abyssinia was doubtless a mortal sin which the sinner would have to expiate either in this world or in another. If, however, the historian happened to be a student of

<sup>1</sup> On this question, see pp. 27-30, below.

public affairs who was an Englishman and a British subject, it would ill become him to cajole his own conscience by making a Mussolini his scapegoat; for from an English standpoint—if the English observer viewed the spectacle with open eyes and honest mind—it was impossible to see the tragedy solely in terms of the *hybris* of Mussolini or, for that matter, of a totalitarian Fascist Italy. From an English standpoint the Mussolinian sin of commission—the positive, strong-willed, aggressive egotism which had tempted the Italian war-lord into committing a crime of violence in breach of all his covenants—was inextricably interwoven with a complementary sin of omission: a negative, weak-willed, cowardly egotism which had tempted the reigning politicians in Great Britain and France—in deference to what they believed to be the will of their constituents—to stop short of an effective fulfilment of their own covenants because they flinched from the risks and sacrifices to which their countries stood pledged to expose themselves in the cause of international justice and law and order. While Signor Mussolini had not the patience and imagination to abide by his promises to promote Italy's legitimate national interests by none other than peaceful means, his French and British fellow actors had not the virtues requisite for whole-heartedly putting into practice the nobler and wiser policy to which they were paying, all the time, a perfunctory lip service. Their professed intention—if their adherence to the Covenant of the League of Nations and to the Kellogg-Briand Pact was to be taken seriously—was to establish a reign of law and order in the international arena by making a reality of both the twin pillars of Justice: Collective Security and Peaceful Change. Yet, when their sincerity was put to a supreme test through an Italian challenge (at first plaintive and finally truculent) in the seventeen post-war years that ended in 1935, the French and English did not muster up either the generosity and imagination to make a success of Peaceful Change or the courage and imagination to make a success of Collective Security. They neither responded in 1920 to Signor Tittoni's plea for an equitable distribution of raw materials<sup>1</sup> nor restrained Signor Mussolini in 1935 from launching an aggressive war against Abyssinia.<sup>2</sup>

In this light it is apparent that the sin which was committed in 1935 was not merely Mussolini's or Fascismo's or Italy's. This guilt was shared by Britain and France, and in some measure by the whole living generation of the Western Society—for example, by the con-

<sup>1</sup> See p. 15, footnote 1, below.

<sup>2</sup> The evidence in support of this statement is presented in the present volume *passim*.

temporary Canadians whose gentle spokesman had inflicted at Geneva, in 1920, a diplomatic defeat upon the Italians' timid spokesman, Signor Tittoni. Nor was it only the living generation of the Western Society that was implicated; for Signor Mussolini came nearest to justifying his own crime and to putting the sanction-taking Powers out of countenance when he proclaimed<sup>1</sup> that, in seeking to acquire an overseas empire by force of arms, the Italians were simply doing in the twentieth century what the British and French had done in the nineteenth and eighteenth centuries, the Dutch and Swedes in the seventeenth century, and the Spaniards and Portuguese in the sixteenth.

On this wider, and perhaps also deeper, view, Signor Mussolini's deliberate personal sin might be almost eclipsed by his involuntary historical rôle of exposing the moral perversity of the once Christian society which had confessed its apostasy in the act of raising him to power. The perversity of the modern Western ideal of Nationalism was shown up by an Italian Imperialism which was the aftermath of an Italian *Risorgimento*. The perversity of the modern Western intellectual feat of Physical Science was shown up by the application of chemistry and aeronautics to the devilish device of spraying poison gas from the air. The perversity of the modern Western commercial spirit—a worship of Mammon from which the nineteenth-century philosophers had naïvely expected a redemption of the World—was shown up by the greed with which (after, as well as before, the application of economic sanctions against Italy) the business-men of even the best behaved and most brightly enlightened countries of the Western World rushed in to make their profit by catering for the aggressor's military requirements.<sup>2</sup>

If we try to marshal the several participants in the tragedy in their order of merit, we shall find that the poorest figure was cut by those with the most specious claim to represent the fine flower of Western culture.

The *beau rôle* was played by the Emperor Haile Selassie, the heir of a non-Western Christian tradition, who combined an antique virtue with an enlightened modernism without either relapsing into the truculent barbarism of his own predecessor Theodore or sliding into the unprincipled rascality of a twentieth-century Chinese war-lord. The second prize might be awarded to the Emperor's Amhara warriors—who knew how to die like Spartans, though they might not know how to fight like Pathans<sup>3</sup>—and these military honours might be

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 16 and 159, below.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 220-1, below.

<sup>3</sup> See pp. 371-2, below.

divided between the Lion of Judah's whelps and their African antagonists—Eritrean and Libyan Askaris—who fought with an equal bravery in a fratricidal war into which they had been hounded by the avarice and ambition of Italian empire-builders who were only taking a leaf out of a French and English book when they trained their non-European subjects to fight their battles for them.

Of all the Europeans who were concerned in the African war of 1935–6 the most respectable were the Italian workmen, who performed prodigies of labour in building motor-roads at an extraordinary pace over an intractable terrain.<sup>1</sup> Even the Italian soldiers, who submitted to being mobilized and sent to march and climb over trackless Ethiopian mountains under a tropical sun, deserve their meed of praise; and so do the majority of their countrymen who stayed at home; for these, too, followed their leader in a war (which, as they saw it, was defensive as well as bloodless) against a barrage of sanctions (a newfangled weapon which was nerve-racking just because it was intangible). As for Signor Mussolini, he never responded to the Emperor's challenge to meet him in the field; yet he showed a moral courage (for the like of which many English people were looking in vain to their constitutionally appointed Government) in sending half a million Italians to conduct a difficult military campaign on the farther side of the Suez Canal when the British Fleet was concentrated in the Levant, while fifty-two states had agreed to co-operate in frustrating Mussolini's military aims by imposing on Italy at any rate a partial economic boycott. In virtue of this courage, for what it was worth, the Italian dictator cut at least a more heroic figure than the politicians and the electorates of Great Britain and France, upon whom History would perhaps pass the laconic verdict that they failed to do their duty—though they had no title to claim invincible ignorance of what this duty was, and would also find it difficult to prove that here duty was in conflict with self-interest (unless self-interest were to be interpreted as a sheer licence to sacrifice the welfare of to-morrow to the ease of to-day).

In this common feebleness the French showed a greater frankness, though not any greater nobility or sharper vision, than their English neighbours. The French made no concealment of their naively unprincipled hope that they might be able to sabotage the application of the Covenant against Italy in order to preserve this self-same Covenant intact for future use against Germany—with a triumphant Italian Covenant-breaker helping France, in the name of the Covenant, to hold Germany in check! The English, for their part, desired to do

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 379, 389 *n.*, below.

what they had pledged themselves to do for the vindication of international law and order, and they also believed that honesty was actually the best policy for the British Empire in this case; but at the same time they made a stipulation with themselves that neither Justice nor Expediency were to be ensued to a point at which they might entail any serious risk or sacrifice in which the whole, or even the major part, of the burden would fall upon the United Kingdom.

The electorate of the United Kingdom was less clear-sighted and self-conscious in this matter than the politicians who were soliciting their votes; but, by the same token, the electorate might also be judged to be more sincere. A vein of insincerity appeared to reveal itself in the behaviour of prominent members of 'the National Government' in at least three test cases which arose in the course of the calendar year 1935. The first case was the abrupt change of tone towards 'the Peace Ballot' as soon as it became apparent that it was proving a success;<sup>1</sup> the second case was the contrast between the compact which Sir Samuel Hoare made in private with Monsieur Laval at Geneva on the 10th September and the speech which he delivered in public in the Assembly of the League of Nations on the following day;<sup>2</sup> the third case was the apparent inconsistency between the platform on which the 'National' coalition won a general election on the 14th November and the terms of 'the Laval-Hoare Peace Plan' in which Mr. Baldwin and his colleagues acquiesced within fourteen days of meeting the newly elected parliament with a majority that ensured an extension of their tenure of office.<sup>3</sup> The leaders and partisans of 'the National Government' also struck a note which, besides sounding hollow, might perhaps be criticized as impolitic when they persistently commended themselves to the electorate for their determination to keep the country out of war while they were in the act of rearming.

Since Great Britain and France, between them, were still, at this time, the hub of the Western universe, these symptoms of political feebleness in these two countries were serious portents for the general destiny of the Western Society. At a time when the parochialism of the latest age was rapidly being turned into an anachronism by the forced march of technical progress, it might confidently be assumed that the destiny of this society was some form of social and political unification by some means or other. At the same time there were two alternative routes to that single and therefore inevitable goal; and it looked as though this choice of means for arriving at an

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 51-5, below.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 183 *seqq.*, below.

<sup>3</sup> See pp. 65 *seqq.*, 301 *seqq.*, below.

inexorable end might make the whole difference between social catastrophe and social welfare.

One way towards the unification of the World would be for the British Commonwealth of Nations, in collaboration with France and with a number of other liberal-minded communities, to build itself into a League of Nations constituted on the democratic pattern and informed with the democratic spirit, and to lay stone on stone—never ceasing from mental strife nor letting the sword sleep in the hand—until this voluntary association should have become substantially secure and approximately world-wide. This was, indeed, the enterprise to which the United Kingdom and France, on emerging from the ordeal of 1914–18, had officially dedicated themselves in company with all their fellow states members of the then inaugurated League, and when once their intuition had thus prompted them to take the tide of Destiny at the flood, they had started on their voyage with the fairest prospect of its leading on to Fortune. Yet at the time of writing in 1936, which was the eighteenth year of this post-war international voyage of political exploration, the prospect was dismally blighted and the heavens were gloomily overcast. At this moment it looked as though the strain of ‘making the World safe for Democracy’ by force of arms had broken the nerve of the official victors in the last General War, and broken it so seriously that they were now finding themselves morally incapable of making the lesser efforts and taking the slighter risks that must still be faced if the true harvest of the victory of 1918 was to be triumphantly gathered in.<sup>1</sup> This apparent failure of nerve was the more extraordinary in view of the penalty which it threatened to entail—a penalty which was so appalling and so imminent that it could hardly be overlooked or ignored. In effect, the French and English in 1935–6 were confronted with a choice between making the post-war system of law and order genuinely work or else seeing the frail structure relapse into the chaotic anarchy which had begotten not only the war of 1914–18 but one war behind another before that. If, with this choice before them, the two leading democratic nations of Western Europe did irrevocably fail to rise to the occasion, then History would assuredly pronounce upon their fatal default the verdict that

No man having put his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the Kingdom of God.

<sup>1</sup> This had been the fate of Holland in the eighteenth century, after her victory in her heroic struggle against Louis XIV from A.D. 1672 to A.D. 1713. In A.D. 1936 it looked as though both the United Kingdom and France might now, in their turn, be on the point of retiring from the international arena, as Holland and Sweden and Spain and Portugal had all retired in their turn.

If the oecumenical society of this generation was not destined to achieve its inevitable political unification along the path of voluntary co-operation in the shape of the League of Nations, what was the alternative route by which it was condemning itself to travel? That route was clearly indicated when a young English airwoman succeeded in flying from Croydon to Capetown in 78½ hours a few days after a number of young Italian airmen—only a few hours' flying distance away from the Central African section of her course—had been engaged in spraying poison gas from their planes in order to break the *moral* of a warlike nation which had hitherto managed to maintain its independence against all comers over a period of at least two thousand years. In the synchronism between these two feats of aircraft, the destiny of Society was written on the skies for all to read there. If the World was not to be unified politically by a voluntary agreement, it was manifestly destined to have its inevitable unity imposed upon it by a violence armed with the full powers of the latest Western technique. And it was idle to scout this prospect on the ground that human beings would shrink from turning these terrible powers to account for the perpetration of murder on so vast a scale, or again on the ground that the enterprise of unifying the World by force would prove to be beyond the strength of even the most potent and ruthless and unscrupulous warlord. Such *a priori* arguments were refuted in advance by the testimony of History; for History bore witness that, whenever men found themselves at war, they invariably made weapons out of every instrument at their command, and she also preserved the record of at least a dozen instances in which a society that was ripe for political unification had been unified by military force, even when the empire-building militarists had disposed of only a modest fund of technique. The classic example of such unification through military conquest was called to mind by Signor Mussolini's conceit of reviving the Roman Empire; and while it was improbable that the oecumenical empire in which the Roman Empire would find its counterpart in the modern World would be established by Fascist Italy, it was not impossible that, in striking down the League of Nations, the head of the Italian state was opening the door to world-power (a veritable *ianua leti*) for some mightier competitor in the shape of a National-Socialist Germany or a Communist Russia.

This was the vista which was opened up in A.D. 1936 by the French and British peoples' apparent failure of nerve and hankering for release from responsibility even at the price of abdication; and in this light it was they, rather than Signor Mussolini, who were to be

regarded as the central figures in the current act of the international drama. For that reason the writer of this *Survey* has addressed himself, in the texts on the title-page, to his own countrymen and not to the Italian dictator.

## (ii) Motives and Attitudes of the Belligerents and other Parties

### (a) INTRODUCTORY NOTE

In previous volumes of this *Survey*<sup>1</sup> some account has been given of the admission of Abyssinia to membership of the League of Nations by a unanimous vote of the Fourth Assembly on the 28th September, 1923, and also of the post-war relations between Abyssinia and the three European Great Powers—Italy, Great Britain and France—by whose African possessions and protectorates the territories of the Empire of Ethiopia in this age were encircled and cut off from the sea. In this connexion some of the relevant features of Abyssinia's long and distinctive and remarkable history have been recalled with the utmost possible brevity. In the present volume the record has to be carried on beyond the latest events so far mentioned in this series: namely the signature of the Italo-Abyssinian Pact of Friendship and Arbitration of the 2nd August, 1928, and the accrediting of Ethiopian Ministers to the Courts of St. James's and the Quirinal in November 1929.

The narrative can be divided into several distinct chapters: the five years of relative quiescence which came to an end when the Walwal incident occurred on the 5th December, 1934; the history of the Walwal incident itself and the long ensuing controversy which ended in a settlement that was as fruitless as it was unexpected; the history of the military operations which were precipitated by the Italian army's invasion of Abyssinia on the 3rd October, 1935, without declaration of war; and the history of the action taken by the Council and Assembly of the League of Nations and by the states members acting both jointly and severally in fulfilment of their obligations under the Covenant. As the Italo-Abyssinian conflict thus becomes the focus of the international relations of the greater part of the World, the bulk of the events to be recorded swells to such dimensions as to leave no space in this volume for recapitulating the historical antecedents of the crisis on a corresponding scale; and the reader must therefore be referred to the retrospect—inadequate though this is—that has been given in the previous volumes above cited. On the other hand, the events that are the subject of this

<sup>1</sup> The *Survey* for 1920-3, pp. 393-6; the *Survey* for 1929, pp. 208-32.



volume can hardly be made comprehensible without a preliminary survey of the motives and the attitudes of the *dramatis personae*—a cast which came to embrace a majority of the principal Governments, nations, churches and races of the World.

By the January of 1936, when the first draft of the present chapter was being written, the war in East Africa had already become a burning question everywhere. It was being discussed by illiterate Negro villagers on the Gold Coast as eagerly as it was being debated in the press and in the parliaments and on the wireless of the great cities of the White Man's World. It had already produced inter-racial disturbances, west of the Atlantic, in the West Indian Island of St. Vincent and in Harlem, the Negro quarter of New York. It had brought about the fall of a British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and had had much to do with the subsequent fall of a French Prime Minister. It had made what might prove to be a permanent impress on the foreign policy of the United States, as well as on that of the United Kingdom and France. And it had precipitated a stubborn contest of wills over the question of whether the legally declared aggressor was to be further restrained from his transgression against the Covenant by the imposition of an 'oil sanction'—a now universally current term of public controversy which would have been quite unintelligible to all but a handful of experts even as lately as a few months back.

The situation thus created was shot through with paradoxes. The country which was now the hub of the wheel of world affairs was one of the most backward—and hitherto the most obscure—of the existing sixty or seventy fully self-governing states among which the living generation of Mankind was partitioned at this moment. The Amharic-speaking masters of this Empire of Ethiopia were being vilified by their Italian assailants, in one and the same breath, as Negroes and as the alien oppressors of Negro victims; and both these at first sight contradictory grounds of vituperation had a certain plausibility, since the Amharas were a people of Semitic speech and of Arabian origin who in the course of some two thousand years had imposed themselves as conquerors upon an African Hamite and Negro population and in the process had acquired a potent and perhaps predominant strain of native African blood. At the same time these unwarrantably race-proud Amharas, who believed that their earliest dynasty was descended from Solomon, and who styled their reigning emperor 'the Lion of the Tribe of Judah', were being hailed as champions of the Black Race by the Negroes of the Old World and the New beyond the Ethiopian frontiers; while simultaneously the

international crime which was being committed against Abyssinia by one of the White nations of Western Christendom whose leader was posing as the liberator of the Negus's oppressed Negro subjects, was being taken by other White Men—and this not only in Europe, but also in Russia and in North America and in the Antipodes—as a test case of the ability of a Westernized (and to that extent a White Man's) World to substitute the rule of law and justice for the inherited social and moral chaos of its international relations.

In attempting to comprehend this agitated and complicated scene we shall perhaps do well to take a bird's-eye view of the motives and attitudes of the principal actors before we immerse ourselves in the turbid stream of events; and, in making this preliminary survey, we will follow the natural course of beginning with the two protagonists.

### (b) THE ABYSSINIAN STANDPOINT

The dominant feeling in the hearts of the Abyssinians, as they awaited and eventually met the Italian assault in the year 1935, is expressed in two sentences which the Emperor Haile Selassie had addressed nine years back, when he was serving as Regent of the Empire, to the Governments of Abyssinia's fellow states members of the League of Nations.

Throughout their history [the people of Abyssinia] have seldom met with foreigners who did not desire to possess themselves of Abyssinian territory and to destroy their independence. With God's help, and thanks to the courage of our soldiers, we have always, come what might, stood proud and free upon our native mountains.<sup>1</sup>

Both the indictment and the claim that are made in this passage are justified by the facts of the history of Abyssinia, which in this aspect displays a close resemblance to the history of Japan.<sup>2</sup> The successive Muslim and Frankish attacks upon Abyssinian independence had been repelled as valiantly and as victoriously as the successive Mongol and Frankish attacks upon Japanese independence;<sup>3</sup> and the living memory of these past achievements had inspired the Amharas, like the Japanese, with a national pride and self-confidence which caused both peoples to reject resentfully the rôle of 'natives'

<sup>1</sup> Circular note of the 19th June, 1926, addressed by Ras Tafari Makonnen (as he then was) to the states members of the League. The passage has been quoted already in the *Survey for 1929*, p. 209.

<sup>2</sup> The parallel has been drawn in the *Survey for 1929*, p. 210.

<sup>3</sup> The first Frankish threat to Abyssinian and to Japanese independence came from the same quarter at the same date. In the latter part of the sixteenth and the early part of the seventeenth century of the Christian Era, both Abyssinia and Japan nearly fell under the dominion of the Portuguese.

for which their European and American visitors would have liked to cast them.

In the year 1935 the social order in the Empire of Ethiopia was still feudal, and the proneness of a feudal society to sedition and civil war was a factor of which the Italians were not slow to take advantage.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Abyssinia was grievously handicapped by a division against herself of which the Emperor Haile Selassie was perhaps more acutely conscious than were his Italian adversaries. This was not the division between Christians and Muslims or between Amharas and non-Amharas or between overlord and vassals, but the division between a progressive minority, with the Emperor at its head, and a reactionary majority which included most of the Rases.<sup>2</sup>

This slowness of the majority of the Abyssinians to realize, and conform to, the necessities of the times gives the measure of their backwardness in culture by comparison with their Japanese contemporaries. In Japan the lesson taught by Commodore Perry's forcible entry into Yedo Bay in 1853 and by the bombardment of the Shimonoseki forts by an international squadron in 1863 was learnt so promptly and so thoroughly that all but a fraction of the feudal nobility and their retainers had voluntarily renounced their ancient privileges as early as 1868 in order to clear the ground for a reconstruction of Japanese society on a basis on which Japan would be competent to hold her own in an irretrievably Westernized World. In that very year 1868 the Abyssinians had been given just such a lesson in the shape of Lord Napier's victorious march to Magdala and unscathed return to the coast; and this lesson had been driven home, between 1882 and 1896, by the first Italian attempt to conquer the country. Yet, sixty-seven years after Napier's ominous passage, an enlightened Emperor, supported by a tiny band of Western-educated young men, was still struggling to impress the necessity for a radical reform of Abyssinian life upon a feudal nobility which was still apparently blind to the urgency of the Emperor's programme. The Amharas' pride in their glorious military history ought to have been tempered by the recollection that on two occasions already—in the sixteenth century and in the nineteenth—their forefathers' valour had not availed to save them from all but succumbing to enemies armed with new-fangled products of the Frankish genius for lethal blacksmith's work. In the sixteenth century Abyssinia had been overrun by a handful of 'Osmanli matchlockmen and in the nineteenth century by a handful of Italian riflemen; and on each occasion the Lion of the Tribe of Judah had only been saved because, in the nick of time,

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 373-5, below.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. feudal lords: literally 'heads'.

a supply of the new weapons had been thrust into his hand by a friend in need—a Portuguese friend in the one case and a French friend in the other. This history of unearned good fortune could not be expected to continue to repeat itself—especially after the 7th January, 1935, when, for European reasons, Abyssinia's French patron had gone over to the Italian side.<sup>1</sup> Ultimately, the Abyssinians could only save themselves by Westernizing themselves sufficiently to hold their own in warfare against a Western Power without Western aid; and this would mean Westernizing themselves through and through. The deadly weakness of Abyssinia in her fearful ordeal of A.D. 1935-6 was the failure of the majority of her people to realize this home truth sixty years before. They had allowed two precious generations to pass without waking from their sluggish self-complacency; and in June 1936—when, after a seven months' war, the Amharas lay prostrate under the nozzle of the Italian invader's gas-sprayer—it seemed possible that the wages of this mortal sin of omission might prove to be nothing less than the capital punishment of losing, not only their dominion over the more backward African peoples around them, but also their own two-thousand-years-old existence as an independent national community.

### (c) THE ITALIAN STANDPOINT

It was a combination of a number of different considerations—material and psychological, economic and political—that moved Signor Mussolini to impose on Italy the heavy immediate sacrifices, and the still more formidable risks, that his East African adventure entailed. The most potent of these considerations had nothing to do with Abyssinia or with Italo-Abyssinian relations, but were concerned either with Italy herself or with Italy's relations to the rest of the World.

Italy's economic grievance was closely akin to the economic grievance of Japan, which had been one of the causes of the Japanese militarists' outbreak in the autumn of 1931. Like Japan, Italy was a country with a dense and rapidly increasing population and with an unusually poor natural endowment of material resources. Only 41.4 per cent. of the total land-surface of Italy was cultivable—even when the cultivated area had been extended to the verge of diminishing returns in the Fascist 'Battle of the Grain'<sup>2</sup>—and a strictly circumscribed agriculture could not be supplemented out of home resources by an extensive manufacturing industry because the subsoil was

<sup>1</sup> See the *Survey for 1935*, vol. i, Part I, section (v).

<sup>2</sup> See the *Survey for 1927*, p. 127.

notably deficient in those minerals, particularly coal and iron ore, which were the indispensable basis of industrial production according to the modern Western technique. During the past half-century, the pressure of Italian population upon Italian means of subsistence had been accentuated by a diminution of the death-rate (through an improvement in public health and also—in the teeth of adverse circumstances—in the standard of living) which outstripped the contemporaneous fall in the birth-rate;<sup>1</sup> and during the post-war years the congestion had been seriously increased owing to the arbitrary restriction of immigration from Europe into the overseas countries of European origin—first and foremost, the United States.<sup>2</sup> The last blow had been the progressive exclusion of Italian exports from the world market under the influence of the wave of economic nationalism that swept over all countries—including the British mother-country of Free Trade—after the onset of the World Economic Crisis since the autumn of 1929. It is true that this economic nationalism was both the faith and the practice of Italy herself, and that Signor Mussolini had retorted to foreign restrictions upon Italian immigration by discouraging Italian emigration, on the ground that Italy's human crop, which was her most precious product, ought not to be exported in order to enrich alien soils under foreign flags.<sup>3</sup> Yet, since Man—or at any rate *Homo Politicus*—is not a rational animal, the Italian resentment at the economic difficulties that were being placed in Italy's path by the policy of other countries was not diminished by the fact that Italy was all the time doing her worst to place the same difficulties in the path of her neighbours as far as this lay in her power.

By the beginning of the year 1935 Italy's financial and economic position was undoubtedly serious<sup>4</sup>—partly by reason of Italy's own inherent material weakness; partly by reason of the World Economic Crisis which was afflicting her in common with other countries; and partly in consequence of the measures with which the Fascist régime was attempting to combat both the temporary and the permanent economic evil. The public works of which these measures largely consisted<sup>5</sup> might perhaps have been beneficial in themselves if their

<sup>1</sup> The birth-rate had fallen from an average of 36·8 per 1,000 in the years 1872–5 to 23·7 in 1933. There had, however, been a corresponding fall in the death-rate from 30·5 to 13·7 per 1,000.

<sup>2</sup> For the effect of the United States Immigration Restriction Acts of 1921 and 1924 upon Italian life, see the *Survey for 1924*, Part I B, section (ii).

<sup>3</sup> See the *Survey for 1927*, pp. 124–31.

<sup>4</sup> See chapter (xii) below.

<sup>5</sup> See Royal Institute of International Affairs, Information Department: *The Economic and Financial Position of Italy* (2nd edition: London, September 1935, Milford), pp. 47–9.

value could have been calculated apart from the strain that they imposed upon the general economic stamina of the country; but, on a comprehensively framed account of profit and loss, they were showing themselves to be not worth their price—and this the more so inasmuch as the scale on which these works were being executed was not determined purely by economic calculations, but was largely governed by motives of political prestige, and even personal megalomania, which tended towards a quite uneconomic grandiosity.<sup>1</sup> Yet, in spite of all this—and in spite of the toll that had been taken from Italian prosperity by Italy's belligerency in the General War of 1914–18—the standard of living of the agricultural and industrial working-class in Italy was distinctly higher in 1935, on the eve of the Italo-Abyssinian War, than it had been in 1870, on the morrow of the completion of the political unification of the peninsula. If they had been content to measure their material prosperity in terms of their own Italian past, the Italians of this generation of 1935 would have had no great cause to complain of the material progress that the Italian people had made over a span of sixty-five years. The actual measure, however, by which the Italians reckoned at this date was the contemporary prosperity of their non-Italian neighbours of their own status, and here they were setting themselves the highest possible standard; for, in virtue of her political unification, Italy had come to rank as a Great Power. The material resources—in cultivable land and minerals, in raw materials and markets—of the greatest of the Great Powers of the day, the British Empire, the French Republic, the Soviet Union, the United States, thus gave the measure of the material endowment which Fascist Italy demanded for herself as her right.

In stating their demands in these terms, the Italians were pressing beyond the limits of the field of absolute material needs into the vast, and perhaps boundless, domain of relative requirements which might still be material in form (in the shape of territory or of raw materials) but were psychological in essence inasmuch as the craving that chiefly prompted them was a thirst for status and not a hunger for

<sup>1</sup> A monument of this spirit which thrust itself upon the attention of foreign visitors to Italy was the colossal railway station at Milan which was opened in July 1931 to replace an unassuming but serviceable predecessor. A visitor who was familiar with the United States could hardly fail to receive the impression that in this colossal structure Signor Mussolini was deliberately setting himself to outdo the architects of the Grand Central Station, New York. The same megalomania had shown itself in 1927 in the stabilization of the lira at an excessive value which was manifestly chosen, not on an expert estimate of the lira's natural level, but in order to put the previously stabilized French franc out of countenance.

bread.<sup>1</sup> For example, in Article 13 of the quadripartite London Treaty of the 26th April, 1915, in virtue of which Italy had intervened in the General War of 1914-18, the Italian Government had stipulated for some 'equitable' compensation in the event of France and Great Britain increasing their colonial territories in Africa at the expense of Germany;<sup>2</sup> and though 'equitable' was not synonymous

<sup>1</sup> The writer of this *Survey* does not, of course, mean to imply that the material deficiencies under which Italy was labouring were not in fact severe or not severely felt. The depth and the consistency of the Italian feeling on this matter are attested by Signor Tittoni's speech of the 10th November, 1920, at the Eighth Plenary Meeting of the First Assembly of the League of Nations. Fifteen years in advance, Italy's economic case in 1935 had been put by Signor Mussolini's predecessor perhaps as forcibly, and certainly as convincingly, as it could have been put by Signor Mussolini himself. The following extracts may encourage the reader to turn to the original:

'Henceforth, it must be frankly admitted that the existence of nations depends on the solution of the economic question. If the war [of 1914-18] has fulfilled the expectations of those who desired the triumph of liberty and justice in the sphere of politics, it has completely failed to satisfy the expectations of those who desired justice and equality in the sphere of economics. We are bound to admit, as a matter of fact, that the relations existing between states have become more difficult and more acrimonious than was the case before the war. Protectionist barriers have been erected everywhere; export duties and differential duties have been established. I appeal to the states which have had recourse to this system. I say to them that if, up to the present, there has been no actual quarrel between the different states, that is only because there have been no reprisals. If the victims of this system should seek to defend themselves, and resort to the same methods, they would let loose on the World an economic war; and, if that should happen, how could you hope to preserve peace?

'I desire to draw the attention of the Assembly to the gravity of this question, for these are undeniably very weighty and very serious matters, involving interests of the highest importance, which cannot be settled perfunctorily, and with regard to which I have no easy solution to offer.

'To those privileged states which enjoy a monopoly with regard to raw materials, and to those whose wealth has permitted them to acquire a monopoly of these materials outside their boundaries, I say: Do not wait to be appealed to by the poorer states which are at the mercy of your economic policy, but come forward spontaneously and declare to this Assembly that you renounce all selfish aims, and before the bar of the League of Nations declare yourselves ready to support the cause of international solidarity.'

It is significant that this appeal of Signor Tittoni's was evoked by a foregoing speech from the representative of Canada, in which Mr. Rowell had contended that the economic functions of the League were of secondary importance, and that, in general, economic matters were domestic questions. 'I think it is unfortunate', Mr. Rowell had observed in this context, 'to throw out to this Assembly and to the public any proposal to the effect that the Covenant of the League covers the question of raw materials.'

<sup>2</sup> See the *Survey for 1920-23*, pp. 360-1, and the *Survey for 1924*, pp. 463-70. The text of Article 13 of the Treaty of the 26th April, 1915, ran as follows:

'Dans le cas où la France et la Grande-Bretagne augmenteraient leurs domaines coloniaux d'Afrique aux dépens de l'Allemagne, ces deux Puissances reconnaissent en principe que l'Italie pourrait réclamer quelques

with 'equal' (as British and French statesmen were quick to point out), the word did carry the implication that Italy, as a member of the privileged order of Great Powers, had a right to that ownership of colonies which was one of the hall-marks of her older and more fortunate peers.

The feeling that Italy had received unduly short measure in the distribution of colonial assets, owing to the unfortunate accident of the lateness of her entry into the goodly company of imperialists, was a powerful political driving force in Italian souls; and this grievance over a question of status—or pique of *amour propre*—was not only distinct from, but was also not necessarily related with, any absolute material Italian need of colonies as outlets for population or as sources of supply for raw materials or as markets for exports. In the colonial field Italy had been ambitious to emulate the past achievements of England and France, ever since the completion of the political unification of Italy herself in 1870. And Signor Mussolini was undoubtedly expressing sentiments that a majority of the Italian people heard with approval from the lips of a national leader when he declared to a sympathetically Fascist-minded French journalist in the summer of 1935:

I think for Italy as the Great Englishmen who have made the British Empire have thought for England, as the great French colonisers have thought for France.<sup>1</sup>

Evidently it did not occur to Signor Mussolini that, in his own day, this kind of thinking might have become an anachronism, and that on this account his own, and his Italy's, misfortune of having been born too late might in fact be irreparable. The post-war master of Italy might, indeed, be pardoned for being blind to this possible truth; for, if it were true at all, it had only become true overnight, since the cataclysm of the General War of 1914–18. Down to the eve of that war Frenchmen and Englishmen had continued to 'think

compensations équitables, notamment dans le règlement en sa faveur des questions concernant les frontières des colonies italiennes de l'Érythrée, de la Somalie et de la Lybie et des colonies voisines de la France et de la Grande-Bretagne.'

The Foreign Office in Whitehall appears to have taken the view that the meaning of the word 'équitables' in this article was defined—and limited—by the concluding phrases beginning with the word 'notamment'. On this interpretation, Italy's claim under the article amounted to no more than a right to demand a rectification, in her favour, of the frontiers of her African possessions where these marched with those of Great Britain and France; and she was not entitled to demand compensations proportionate in extent to the British and French acquisitions at Germany's expense.

<sup>1</sup> Interview given by Signor Mussolini to Monsieur de Kerillis of the *Echo de Paris*, quoted in *The Times*, 1st August, 1935.



imperially' with substantial profit. In Africa, for example, the English had conquered the Eastern Sudan—next door to Italy's coveted field for expansion in Abyssinia—as lately as 1898, and they had straightway proceeded to add to their dominions at the opposite extremity of the same continent by conquering in 1899–1902 the two South African Dutch Republics, whose citizens were no barbaric Baggaras or Amharas but were 'Nordic' White Men of the same West-European race and culture as their English conquerors. As for the French in Africa, they had completed as lately as 1934 the subjugation of Morocco on which they had embarked in 1907. In these circumstances, it was not surprising that Signor Mussolini, while sparing his French sympathisers, should denounce his British critics and opponents as guilty of a flagrant indulgence in the historic British vice of bare-faced hypocrisy. 'As soon' (so ran this Italian indictment) 'as the British have sated themselves with colonial conquests, they impudently draw an arbitrary line across the middle of the page in the Recording Angel's book, and then proclaim: "What was right for us till yesterday is wrong for you to-day".'

From an Italian standpoint this British attitude was insufferable. Yet the fact that it was in harmony with British interests was no proof that it was not also a correct rendering of the verdict of History. For the Italian thesis that 'what was lawful for my neighbour yesterday is lawful for me to-day' was assuredly untenable. If carried to extremes, it would justify any *homo sapiens* of the twentieth century of the Christian Era in practising any atrocity which he could prove to have been practised by any *homo neandertalensis*; and the thesis could not be redeemed from this *reductio ad absurdum* by subjecting it to some arbitrary statute of limitations, such as 'I may lawfully do anything that my neighbour of my own moral standing has ever done at any time within the last forty years'. The fallacy of this at first sight more rational formulation of the Mussolinian thesis lies in the fact that the real time which is measured by the growth of spiritual experience does not flow at an even pace like the 'clock-time' that can be cut up into equal units (of light-years or of seconds). Spiritual time is like a river which moves in some reaches with a motion that is so slow as to be scarcely perceptible, while in other reaches it hurls itself over waterfalls or rushes through rapids. In the flow of such a river a greater distance may be traversed on some particular reach in one unit of clock-time than has been traversed in ten or twenty or a hundred units of the same clock-time in another section of the river's course. And if we picture human history as a river of living water, we may rightly see in the General War of 1914–18 a waterfall

so mighty as to draw a sharp and profound line of division between the reach immediately above and the reach immediately below it.

On the morrow of the Armistice of November 1918 a philosopher-statesman who was one of the outstanding figures on the world stage in this generation had pronounced—in an arresting phrase that has been quoted already in an earlier volume of this series<sup>1</sup>—that ‘the tents’ were ‘struck’ and that ‘the great caravan of Humanity’ was ‘once more on the march’. In the international crisis which was precipitated by Italy’s act of aggression against Abyssinia, General Smuts spoke up promptly and firmly in favour of bringing the aggression to a stop by a whole-hearted application of the Covenant of the League of Nations; and in taking this stand he proved to be of one mind with his present colleague and late political opponent (General Hertzog and with an overwhelming majority of his fellow countrymen.<sup>2</sup> South African public opinion showed no sign of being convinced by Signor Mussolini’s argument that post-war Italy should have licence to emulate the pre-war international crimes of Italy’s fellow Great Powers; and the South African attitude was noteworthy, since the South African burghers were more closely acquainted than the Italian dictator with the most recent of the precedents to which he was appealing. The Afrikaners as a community, and General Smuts in person, had been victims of the latest and perhaps least defensible fling of British imperialism. Yet, in 1935, this bitter memory did not tempt them to align themselves with Signor Mussolini on the ground that the British were debarred, by so recent an offence of their own, from setting the law in motion against an Italian imitator of former British methods.

The truth was that the General War of 1914–18 had demonstrated, in the short span of four years, a moral and social truth, of vital import for the future of the Western World, which had previously been overlooked or ignored by a society which might have divined it—had it had the necessary sensitiveness and good will—at any time during the preceding fifty years. This truth was that the sin of aggression had become mortal instead of merely venial, in consequence of the vast change for the worse in the moral character and material effects of the institution of War owing to the application to War of the two

<sup>1</sup> *The World After the Peace Conference*, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> The relative strength of the pro-Covenant and anti-Covenant parties in South Africa may be gauged from the outcome of the debate in the House of Assembly at Cape Town on the 31st January and the 3rd February, 1936. In this debate Dr. Malan’s neutrality motion was rejected by 98 votes to 14, and the Government’s policy was endorsed by 94 votes to 14. Dr. Malan’s, General Hertzog’s and General Smuts’s speeches in this debate are all instructive.

new forces of Democracy and Industrialism. In the overwhelming experience of 1914-18, the cumulative result of half a century of historical development had been revealed with a clarity which no adult observer—and certainly no responsible statesman—had any excuse for mistaking. This was perhaps the answer to Signor Mussolini's invective against the 'hypocrites' and 'fanatics' who were throwing stones at him from the doorsteps of British glass-houses. In so far as his scorn and indignation were sincere, they convicted the head of the Italian state of an inability or an unwillingness to read the glaring signs of the times.

To this censure Signor Mussolini might perhaps have retorted that his British critics, on their own showing, were themselves no less perverse than they were making their Italian *bête noire* out to be. For if the War of 1914-18 had really demonstrated that War itself had ceased to be a tolerable or practicable instrument of change in human affairs, then it was surely the duty of all British publicists and statesmen who had seen this great light to exert themselves, from the morrow of the Armistice of 1918, to create new ways and means for effecting in future without breaches of the peace a process of change which would inexorably continue to work itself out through War if not through Peace because Change in some form was inherent in the nature of Life. Indeed, Signor Mussolini might have gone on, very plausibly, to extol his own moderation, through thirteen post-war years, in face of the complacently intransigent opposition to any change of any kind in the international situation which Italy had encountered on the part of the sated Powers in the victors' camp. While frankly admitting that in the end he had deliberately chosen to resort to the old-fashioned well-tried method of change by means of war—in a surely well-justified despair of ever seeing 'peaceful change' become practical politics—Signor Mussolini could still claim that he was neither so wicked nor so foolish nor so megalomaniac as to seek expansion for Italy by way of another General War between the Great Powers of the World. He was (he would have said) as well aware as anybody that another General War would be an unpardonable crime which would find its retribution in an irretrievable disaster; and he would have added that he had no intention of ever taking the initiative in precipitating such a catastrophe. He would have gone on to draw a distinction between a war of this wicked and fearful kind and 'a colonial operation' in which some single 'civilized' Power would be forcibly imposing the rule of Civilization upon some backward and barbarous people. A 'colonial operation', he would have declared, was all that he himself was contemplating; and if other people, by opposing his will, were to force

him to convert this local affair into a General War, the responsibility would be theirs and not his.

If the League of Nations were so reckless as to expand a remote colonial campaign into a general European war, which would open wide the door to every unsatisfied ambition on the Continent or even throughout the World—and it would cost, this time, not millions but tens of millions of lives—then it would be upon the League that the guilt would rest.<sup>1</sup>

According to Signor Mussolini's thesis, 'colonial operations' differed from European wars *in toto*, both on the plane of ethics and on the plane of expediency. So far from its being wrong and disastrous, it was both right and beneficial that the domain of 'Civilization' should be extended at 'Barbarism's' expense. A 'civilized' Power that undertook such a task would be conferring a general benefit on the whole of the civilized World in the act of looking after its own national interests;<sup>2</sup> and for other Powers to put spokes in the wheel of the Power undertaking the 'colonial operation' was a sin against 'the solidarity of Civilization'. The true motive of any Power which was guilty of such sinful behaviour could be nothing but the odious anti-social perversity of the dog in the manger; and any alleged motives of a more respectable colour could be dismissed, *a priori*, as either sickly sentiment or shameless humbug.

We find it monstrous that a nation which dominates the world refuses to us a wretched plot of ground in the African sun. . . . The interests for which she is opposing us are other interests, and she does not say so.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Interview with Signor Mussolini published in *The Daily Mail*, 23rd August, 1935, and quoted in *The Times*, 4th October, 1935. This Mussolinian distinction between 'colonial operations' and European wars was frequently reasserted by its author—for example, in an interview with a correspondent of *Le Matin*, which was published on the 17th September, 1935 (see p. 192, below); in his appeal to the students of other countries on the 1st February, 1936 (see p. 335, below), and in his speech on the 5th May, 1936 (see p. 358, below).

<sup>2</sup> This thesis was an application, in the sphere of relations between nations, of the doctrine of 'enlightened self-interest' promoting the common good—a doctrine which the nineteenth-century Liberal philosophers of the Western World had invented as a sanction for the self-regarding economic activities of individual human beings. In another declaration—this time in the *Popolo d'Italia* of the 31st July, 1935 (quoted in *The Times* of the 4th October, 1935), Signor Mussolini was frank enough to admit that the propagation of Civilization and the abolition of slavery would only be incidental consequences of Italian Policy and did not constitute the essential arguments for it.

'The essential arguments, absolutely unanswerable, are two: the vital needs of the Italian people and their security in East Africa. Put in military terms, the Italo-Abyssinian problem is simple and logical. It admits—with Geneva, without Geneva, against Geneva—but one solution.'

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Signor Mussolini published in *Le Matin* of the 17th September, 1935, and quoted in *The Times*, 4th October, 1935.

While the British objections of a juridical order to the Italian act of aggression in Africa were thus brushed aside as insincere, it was considered sentimental to object to the imposition of Civilization by force of arms on the ground that this inevitably involved bloodshed and destruction. In Fascist eyes, it would be as reasonable to object to the surgeon's shedding the blood and shearing through the tissues of the body of the patient whose life he was saving on the operating table. Again, it was humbug to object on the ground that, in the case in point, the 'colonial operation' involved a violation of the League Covenant owing to the fact that the state-victim as well as the state-perpetrator of the operation happened to be a state-member of the League. Signor Mussolini's answer was that this juridical objection was rabbinical and unrealistic.

The true question with regard to Abyssinia was whether Europe was still worthy to carry on in the World the mission of colonization which for several centuries had made it great. If Europe was not worthy, the hour of its decadence had struck. . . . Was the League to be the tribunal before which the negroes, backward peoples, and savages of the World could arraign the great nations which had revolutionized and transformed Humanity?<sup>1</sup>

Signor Mussolini was prepared to plead that the admission of Abyssinia to membership in the League in 1923 had been a mistake, and to confess that the responsibility for this mistake was shared by Italy with France. But, having made this admission, he went on to contend that the mistake had now been proved up to the hilt by Abyssinia's behaviour during the ensuing twelve years; that it was unreasonable that a single error of judgement should inhibit Civilization for ever from putting an end to Barbarism in one of its largest remaining strongholds; and that, in the light of experience, the proper course for the League to take was either to expel Abyssinia or else to decide—whether openly or tacitly—that she should no longer continue to be protected in her incorrigibly bad ways by the possession of a juridical status that ought never to have been conferred upon her. In any case, even if there were to be a formal breach of treaty obligations in Africa in the cause of Civilization, this would not impair their sanctity in Europe, where the interests of Civilization demanded that treaties should be kept and not broken. And, to pass from abstractions to concrete realities, the despatch of a fraction of Italy's vast military man-power overseas would not diminish in the slightest degree the physical ability of Italy to meet the engagements

<sup>1</sup> Statement by Signor Mussolini, published in the *Echo de Paris* of the 21st July, 1935, and quoted in *The Times*, 4th October, 1935.

into which she had entered at Locarno and at Stresa, if the call were to be made upon her in Europe before her African operation had been completed.

These were the justifications for his African enterprise that Signor Mussolini presented to the World; and there was no evidence for suggesting that he himself did not believe in them. At the same time, it is possible to divine other motives in his mind which may have weighed with him more strongly.

One of these motives was a desire to wipe out the humiliation of the Italian defeat at Adowa by Amharan arms thirty-nine years back, in 1896.<sup>1</sup>

The undeserved defeat of Adowa is a wound from which the heart of the Italian people has been smarting for forty years. It must now be healed once for all.<sup>2</sup>

Another motive, with which this motive of revenge coalesced, was a desire to complete the work—and, in the act, to outshine the glory—of the heroes of the *Risorgimento*, in order that the era of Mussolinian Fascism might fill a more splendid page in the history of Italy than the preceding era of Mazzinian and Garibaldian Liberalism. Signor Mussolini had already completed the work of carrying the political unification of Italy to its 'natural' bounds by establishing the north-eastern frontier on the crest of the Julian Alps;<sup>3</sup> he had settled 'the Roman Question';<sup>4</sup> he had drained the Pomptine Marshes; he had stamped out the Camorra. He must have been ambitious to place the coping-stone on this arch of achievement—an arch as mighty as the barrel-roof of the new railway station at Milan—by resuming and completing Crispi's amateur and half-hearted essay in

<sup>1</sup> This motive of revenge was a low one, but English critics of Signor Mussolini could not afford to assume an attitude of moral superiority towards him on that account, considering that the strictly comparable motive of avenging the defeat of a British force by a Boer commando at Majuba Hill in 1881 had undoubtedly been one of the considerations on the British side that led to the South African War of 1899-1902. The British, like the Italians, resented the fact that their own regular troops had been defeated and forced to surrender by an opponent who was both ill-armed and ill-organized. It is strange to observe that no similar rancour seems to have been left in British minds by the annihilating defeat which the Afghans had inflicted on British arms in the war of 1838-42.

<sup>2</sup> Statement by Signor Mussolini in an interview given to *The Daily Mail* on the 23rd August, 1935, and quoted in *The Times*, 4th October, 1935.

<sup>3</sup> For Signor Mussolini's part in the settlement of the post-war frontier between Italy and Yugoslavia, see the *Survey for 1924*, pp. 415-22. The carrying of the northern frontier of Italy to the Brenner, as a result of the victory of the Allied and Associated Powers in the General War of 1914-18, had, of course, been achieved before Signor Mussolini's advent to power.

<sup>4</sup> See the *Survey for 1929*, Part V, section (i).

endowing a united Italy with the colonial empire which she regarded as her due.

A third motive—which sounds fantastic yet cannot be dismissed as a fantasy that had no practical effect on policy—was a desire to emulate not only such modern Italian nation-builders as Garibaldi and Cavour, or such modern foreign empire-builders as Rhodes and Lyautey, but also the Roman statesmen who had anticipated, and had dwarfed in advance, all the diverse political achievements of the whole gang of modern Western peoples. It would seem that Signor Mussolini genuinely aspired to reconstruct the Roman Empire in some shape. In the *Via del Impero* which he had laid out, in 1932, between the Forum Romanum and the Fora of Augustus and Trajan, the modern Italian war-lord had erected four large relief maps showing the expansion of the Roman Empire, from a patch of territory round the Seven Hills into a dominion embracing all the coasts of the Mediterranean and extending beyond them to Britain in one direction and to 'Irāq in another at the moment of its widest extent in the reign of Trajan. Did the ruler of a country which in A.D. 1935 was not only the youngest but also the weakest of the Great Powers of the contemporary world seriously look forward to acquiring, in his own lifetime, an empire which—on the showing of his own maps—it had taken the ancient Romans more than nine hundred years to build up? Signor Mussolini seems to have abated this extreme ambition in two ways. On the one hand, he confined his view almost entirely to the African and Asiatic provinces of Rome, and tacitly renounced in Europe the hope of adding Gaul and Spain and Britain to Noricum and Pannonia and the modern remnant of Illyria. On the other hand, he envisaged the possibility that, even in Africa and Asia, his empire might take the form of a spiritual ascendancy and not that of a dominion conquered by brute force. He made both these points in an address delivered on the 18th March, 1934, to the second quinquennial assembly of the leaders of the Fascist régime, when, after declaring that the historical mission of Italy lay in Asia and Africa, he went on to say that

There must be no misunderstanding upon this centuries-old task assigned to this and future generations of Italians. There was no question of territorial conquests—this must be understood by all, both far and near—but of a natural expansion which ought to lead to a collaboration between Italy and the peoples of Africa and the East. Italy could above all civilize Africa, and her position in the Mediterranean gave her this right and imposed this duty on her. She demanded no privileges and monopolies, but did not want earlier arrivals to block her spiritual, political and economic expansion.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 19th March, 1934.

This translation of the dream of an *imperium redivivum* into non-material and almost transcendental terms was carried still farther in a published work from Signor Mussolini's pen.

The Fascist State is will to power and domination. The Roman tradition becomes herewith an idea of might. In the Fascist doctrines the Imperium is not only a territorial, military, and mercantile expression but it is a spiritual and moral idea. One can imagine an Imperium—that is, a nation which governs other nations—without necessitating the conquest of a single square mile of land. The endeavour for the Imperium—that is, for the extension of the nation—is for Fascism an expression of life; its opposite, the static spirit, is a sign of decay. Nations which are being created or which are reborn are Imperialistic; only dying countries renounce. Fascism, therefore, is the most suitable doctrine to represent the inclinations and spirit of a people which, like the Italian nation, are reborn after many centuries of neglect and foreign rule.<sup>1</sup>

Abyssinia had never been included within the frontiers of the Roman Empire, even at their widest range, and the epiphany of the Italian imperium to the Ethiopians, while duly appearing from heaven, did not take the form of 'a spiritual and moral idea' but announced itself in a hail of bombs followed by a rain of poison gas. Nevertheless, this roseate Roman hallucination to which Signor Mussolini had succumbed must be reckoned among the causes of the international outrage of which Abyssinia was the victim.

A fourth motive was a desire to divert the thoughts of the Italian people from the grinding personal economic distress which had been brought upon them, as has been noticed above,<sup>2</sup> in part by the onset of the World Economic Crisis and in part by Signor Mussolini's own excessively ambitious economic policy, which had been inaugurated in 1927 by the over-valuation of the lira.

In December 1934 two decrees were published which tightened up rigidly the existing exchange restrictions. In May 1935 a further decree ordered the surrender of all privately held foreign investments. In July the decree prescribing a minimum gold cover of 40 per cent. for the Bank of Italy was suspended. And at the end of August the foreign investments commandeered in May were compulsorily converted into Italian Government securities. But these decrees, though drastic, did not indicate any sudden deterioration in the exchange position. Rather, they represented the culmination of a severe strain originally imposed upon the Italian economy by the over-valuation of the currency in 1927.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This pronouncement, quoted in *The Manchester Guardian* of the 26th September, 1935, is taken from an article on the theory of Fascism which Signor Mussolini wrote in 1932 for the *Enciclopedia Italiana*.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 13, above. See also section (xii), below.

<sup>3</sup> Royal Institute of International Affairs, Information Department: *The*



This over-valuation had exacted its price in the shape of an increase in unemployment which declared itself at once in the figures for 1927, and which rose steeply from 1930 onwards when the world-wide crisis reinforced the local effect of the Italian Government's currency policy.<sup>1</sup> For a politician in search of a short cut towards his goal of relieving unemployment and redistributing purchasing power, it might be tempting to mobilize a million men, to draft a quarter of these to Africa, and to re-employ hundreds of thousands more at home on the manufacture of munitions. In a democratic and peaceful-minded country, the politician who did think such a thought would have thrust it from him with horror and have taken care not to let his fellow countrymen suspect that it had ever entered his mind!<sup>2</sup> But such scruples can hardly have assailed a dictator who had declared in August 1934:

It is . . . necessary to be prepared for war, not to-morrow, but to-day. We are becoming, and shall become so increasingly because this is our desire, a military nation. A militaristic nation, I will add, since we are not afraid of words.<sup>3</sup>

The necessity of diverting the people's thoughts from present private hardships at home to future public glories abroad was one aspect of a wider necessity to which all dictators of the Mussolinian and Hitlerian type were subject, without respite, from beginning to end of their careers. One of the conditions of the tenure of these precarious pinnacles of power was that the audacious political acrobat must perform an increasing succession of successful 'stunts' of an ascending order of magnitude; and the precedents indicated that sooner or later the assiduous performer would find himself constrained to select from his repertory a feat beyond his strength. This had been the career of Napoleon III, who was the true prototype of the European dictators of the post-war age. He had barely clambered into the seat of power at Paris before he sent his expeditionary force to Rome in 1849; and from that time onwards he had kept Europe on tenterhooks with his Russian War in 1854-6 and his Austrian War in 1859 and his Mexican expedition in 1864-6, until at last he met his match in a Bismarck who was devoting greater political abilities to

*Economic and Financial Position of Italy* (2nd edition: London, September 1935, Milford), p. 25.

<sup>1</sup> See the Italian unemployment figures from 1926 to June 1935 inclusive in the table in *op. cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> This opinion, which dates from January 1936, perhaps needed some qualification, in an English mouth, by the September of the same year.

<sup>3</sup> Speech delivered by Signor Mussolini at the close of the Italian army manoeuvres in August 1934, quoted in *The Times*, 4th October, 1935.

attaining a precise and limited aim—with the result that the French dictator went down to destruction in his Prussian War of 1870. On a grander scale, Napoleon III's career had been anticipated by his uncle, with whom the dictators of a later generation would have preferred to compare themselves—forgetting that the uncle's career had been shorter than the nephew's and that it had ended in a disaster of no lesser magnitude. The history of the nineteenth-century French dictators boded ill for the prospects of their twentieth-century Italian and German *epigoni*; for this history indicated that the dictatorial career had a predetermined trajectory which was bound to end in a fatal crash to earth.

In considering the Italian standpoint, we have still to ask ourselves two questions: To what extent were the Italian people in accord with their Duce in his pursuit of his East African adventure? And at what date did Signor Mussolini himself make up his mind to use war as the instrument of his national policy of acquiring a colonial empire? Neither of these questions is easy to answer.

The first is difficult by reason of the systematic suppression in Fascist Italy of all spontaneous expression of opinion—a tyranny which had been one of the regular marks of all dictatorships, in all ages, but which could be exercised with unprecedented effectiveness in a world of communities which embraced such vast numbers of human beings that they had come to be almost entirely dependent, for the communication of ideas, upon elaborate artificial aids to direct personal human intercourse: such instruments as the press and the wireless and the telephone and the postal service, all of which could be minutely controlled and manipulated by a dictatorial Government. Through this smoke-screen of official censorship and propaganda, the foreign observer who sought to peer into the domestic life of Italy in 1935 obtained the impression that both Signor Mussolini's war and the League of Nations' sanctions were decidedly unpopular with a majority of the Italian people. It was, indeed, not unnatural that the Italian peasant and workman and shopkeeper and industrialist should dislike both of two policies which were each making life more difficult for him, and that he should resent a foreign attempt to restrain and frustrate an enterprise of his own Government's of which he personally disapproved. The state of mind of the German people during the war-years 1914–18, and again since the advent of Herr Hitler to power at the beginning of the year 1933, had shown that—in the psychological and technical circumstances of modern life—the members of any large nation could easily be misled into mistaking their own parochial public opinion for that of the universe, and confi-

dently defying or ignoring the rest of Mankind. A similar effect was perhaps inevitably produced in Italy by the world-wide political and economic consequences of Italy's certified breach of the Covenant of the League of Nations. But this proneness of modern nations to induce in themselves the mental illusion of solipsism did not diminish the force of the maxim *securus judicat orbis terrarum*. It merely meant that when a single nation went into opposition to the conscience and the will of the Great Society that embraced the whole of Mankind, the contest, under these latter-day conditions, would probably be longer drawn out and therefore more catastrophic in its ultimate *dénouement*.

If the chart of Italian public opinion in 1935 is difficult to plot out, it is perhaps even more difficult to ascertain the date at which Signor Mussolini made up his mind to make war on Abyssinia. Clearly this had not been his intention in 1923, when the Italian representative was instructed (though this perhaps only after some heart-searchings *in camera*) to support the French patronage of Abyssinia's candidature for admission to membership of the League of Nations.<sup>1</sup> As for the Anglo-Italian agreement of 1925 regarding the respective 'interests' of the two contracting parties in Abyssinia,<sup>2</sup> this bore an ominous resemblance to the corresponding preliminaries to the pre-war partitions of Persia and Morocco; yet, in seeking this understanding with England, Signor Mussolini was assuming the posture of a fox who had resigned himself to waiting until his share of the Abyssinian grapes should fall into his mouth, rather than the posture of a man who had made up his mind to lay an axe to the root of the Ethiopian tree. Nor can Signor Mussolini have had war imminently in mind when he negotiated the Italo-Abyssinian non-aggression pact in 1928 and received a permanent Ethiopian diplomatic mission at Rome in 1929 and assented—in reply to rumours of a coming conflict—to the issue in Rome, on the 29th September, 1934, of the following joint Italo-Abyssinian *communiqué*:

The Ethiopian *Chargé d'Affaires*, Megodras Afework, has communicated to the Italian Government that he has been authorized by His Majesty Haile Selassie, Emperor of Abyssinia, to declare formally that the Imperial Government of Ethiopia has never had and does not now have any intentions of aggression against Italy and intends to conform in the most absolute manner to the letter and the spirit of the Italian and Ethiopian treaty of friendship of 1928, not having any motive to disturb the good and friendly relations existing between the two Governments.

In taking note of this communication, the Italian Government has

<sup>1</sup> See the *Survey for 1920-23*, pp. 393-6, and the *Survey for 1929*, p. 218.

<sup>2</sup> See the *Survey for 1929*, pp. 220-1, and *Omd.* 2680 of 1926.

replied to the *Chargé d'Affaires* of Ethiopia that Italy does not have any intention that is not friendly towards the Ethiopian Government, with whom we are bound by the treaty of friendship of 1928.

Italy intends to continue to cultivate with Ethiopia the most friendly relations as a necessary means of augmenting reciprocal political and economic relations.

The publication of this *communiqué* suggests that, at as late a date as this, Signor Mussolini still looked forward to extending his Roman *imperium redivivum* over Ethiopia by the methods of Philip the Deacon rather than by those of Muhammad Gran, and that he expected to achieve this pacific and legitimate aim with the consent of the Ethiopian Imperial Government as well as with that of France and Great Britain.

Was Signor Mussolini's hand forced thereafter by a fear that, if he waited for his policy of peaceful penetration to bear fruit in due season, he might be forestalled by another Power? As early as October 1933 there were rumours in Rome that economic concessions were being obtained from the Ethiopian Government by Japanese enterprise; and in January 1934 it was announced in Tokyo that the daughter of a Japanese nobleman had become engaged to marry a nephew of the Emperor Haile Selassie. Thereafter, in April 1934, it was reported that this engagement had been cancelled as a result of Italian diplomatic pressure. And a year later, in March 1935, a violent campaign against alleged Japanese designs in Abyssinia was launched in the Italian press and was renewed in July—to continue until Great Britain supplanted Japan in the autumn of 1935 in the rôle of Italy's 'Public Enemy Number One'. It is not easy to judge how seriously this Japanese bogey was taken by the Italian Government; but it seems improbable that it can have had any important influence on the development of Signor Mussolini's policy.

Was Signor Mussolini converted from a peace-policy to a war-policy by the Italo-Abyssinian clash of arms at Walwal at the turn of November and December 1934?<sup>1</sup> This cannot be inferred with any assurance from the energy of his immediate reaction; for the Fascist *éthos* and the Fascist creed alike would have impelled him, in any case, to assume that the Abyssinians were in the wrong, and to insist upon a juveniley emphatic vindication of Italian prestige. His reaction, even including the first drafts of additional troops to the East African colonies in excess of the normal establishment, does not convict him of having already made up his mind to fight. And as a matter of fact the Walwal controversy was eventually

<sup>1</sup> For the history of the Walwal incident, see section (iv) (a), below.

settled by agreement when the war of 1935-6 was on the eve of breaking out.

Had Signor Mussolini decided on making war in East Africa by the 7th January, 1935—the date on which he set his signature to the documents constituting the new Franco-Italian Pact?<sup>1</sup> His acquiescence in Monsieur Laval's demand that he should explicitly and publicly accept such unappetizing scraps of French African colonial territory in full settlement of his claims against France for territorial compensation under Article 13 of the London Treaty of the 26th April, 1915, suggests that by this time Signor Mussolini must already have been counting upon some imminent and substantial increase of Italy's African assets at the expense of some party other than France, in order to quench the immediate disappointment which must have been inflicted upon Fascist hearts by the unholy moderation of the Duce's African settlement with Italy's richly dowered 'Latin sister'. Yet Monsieur Laval repeatedly denied in public—and this most amply and emphatically in the crucial debate in the French Chamber on the 28th December, 1935—that he had ever given Signor Mussolini a free hand, as far as France was concerned, to embark on a war of conquest against Abyssinia;<sup>2</sup> and while the truthfulness of Monsieur Laval's *démenti* might conceivably hang upon some fine-drawn distinction between a positive commitment and a broad hint, it is also just conceivable that Signor Mussolini was at this time still looking forward to obtaining by peaceful means that compensation from Ethiopia which his renunciation *vis-à-vis* France would appear to presuppose and to forecast.

On the other hand, Signor Mussolini had undoubtedly decided on war before Mr. Eden paid his abortive visit to Rome on the 23rd-26th June, 1935; and already by that time his estimate of the value of the spoils on which he was counting was pitched so high as to cause him summarily and scornfully to reject the very substantial offers of payment on account of blackmail that were dangled before his eyes by the Government at Westminster<sup>3</sup> and subsequently by the British and French Governments in co-operation and by a committee of the League of Nations at Geneva.<sup>4</sup> We must conclude that Signor Mussolini's fateful decision was certainly taken before the close, but possibly not before the opening, of the first half of the calendar year 1935.

<sup>1</sup> See the *Survey for 1935*, vol. i, Part I, section (v).

<sup>2</sup> See *op. cit.*, p. 109, footnote 2.

<sup>3</sup> See pp. 157-60, below.

<sup>4</sup> See pp. 173-4, 192-5, below.

Which of the conspicuous international events of those six months would have been apt, in itself, to give Signor Mussolini's African policy a warlike instead of a peaceful turn and also to make him feel that he must go to war without delay? Herr Hitler's unilateral repudiation of the disarmament chapter of the Versailles Treaty on the 16th March, 1935, might well have produced that change in Signor Mussolini's plans, and this on four distinct grounds. In the first place, Signor Mussolini may have judged that an Italy which was determined to retain possession of the South Tirol, and on that account to retain control over the post-war remnant of an independent Austria, must face the prospect of having to fight a National-Socialist Germany as soon as the rearmament of Germany was complete, and he may have gone on to argue that Italy must make certain of being mistress of the situation in East Africa before being compelled to concentrate all her energies upon a European battle-field. In the second place, he may have judged that if he was to secure the whip-hand over Abyssinia during the brief respite in Europe that the process of German rearmament promised to give him, he could not afford to content himself with the slow method of peaceful penetration, but must embark upon a war of conquest upon which he would be able to lavish the whole strength of Italy for two or three years if necessary. In the third place, he may have judged that France and Great Britain, much though they might dislike to see Italy take to the sword in East Africa, would feel nevertheless that, in the face of a rapidly re-arming Germany, Italy's present diplomatic and eventual military support in Europe had come to be of such capital importance to them that they must resign themselves to whatever Italy might choose to do in the meanwhile in an African country which, after all, was not either a French or a British possession or even protectorate. In the fourth place, he may have judged that if, in spite of this compelling consideration, the French and British Governments did set themselves to resist and frustrate his new militant African designs, they would find themselves powerless to stop him by resorting to the *ultima ratio* of bringing their armed forces into play, since by that time the French and British armies, navies and air forces would be finding themselves more and more insistently preoccupied by the watch on the Rhine and the patrolling of the North Sea as Germany's military, naval and aerial preparations went forward. If it was really the combined weight of these four considerations that pushed Signor Mussolini into crossing his Mareb-Rubicon on the 3rd October, 1935, we may conclude that the decision was taken at some date between the foregoing 16th March and the 23rd June.

## (d) THE FRENCH STANDPOINT

From the time, towards the middle of the calendar year 1935, when the Italo-Abyssinian dispute began temporarily to take the place of the perhaps ultimately graver issue between a resurgent Germany and her neighbours as the principal action on the international stage, down to the resignation of Monsieur Laval on the 22nd January, 1936, it looked, on the face of it, as though France and Great Britain had exchanged their characteristic post-war rôles; and during those six or seven months each of these two performers imitated the other player's stock attitudes and gestures with such ludicrous fidelity that at moments it was difficult to resist the impression that this apparent exchange of parts must be a deliberately concerted masquerade which was being acted for the diversion of a world-wide audience. During this critical period of international history, it was the British and not the French Government who were taking the initiative and assuming the responsibilities in the name of collective security; inviting the smaller states members of the League to follow their lead; and incidentally incurring the suspicion that this ostensibly disinterested and generous leadership in vindication of a principle really covered—or failed to conceal—an attempt to mobilize world-wide support for ulterior objects which were nakedly British interests. On the other hand, it was now France, and not Great Britain, who was wincing at a demand that she should pledge herself to solidarity with her fellow states members of the League—if necessary, to the extent of taking up arms—in execution of Article 16 of the Covenant, and who was deprecating the importunateness and impracticability of a foreign academic logic which insisted that every juridical breach of international engagements should be treated with a rigidly impartial severity, without regard to the particular political circumstances of each concrete case. The French indictment, and the British defence, of the British condonation of Herr Hitler's unilateral repudiation of the disarmament chapter of the Versailles Treaty—a condonation which, in the French view, was implied in the conclusion of the Anglo-German naval agreement of the 18th June, 1935<sup>1</sup>—might both have been adapted, with little fundamental change, to convey respectively the British indictment, and the French defence, of the French condonation of Signor Mussolini's breach of the Covenant *vis-à-vis* Abyssinia: a condonation which, in the British view, was implied in Monsieur Laval's apparent policy of confining his fulfilment of the

<sup>1</sup> See the *Survey for 1935*, vol. i, Part I, section (vi) (i).

letter of the Covenant within limits that would not prevent him from continuing to act in the spirit of the Franco-Italian Pact of the 7th January, 1935.

The British Government's policy in the Italo-Abyssinian crisis represented on the surface—notwithstanding the temporary naked lapse from grace when the Cabinet in Downing Street acquiesced for some days in 'The Laval-Hoare Peace Plan'<sup>1</sup>—a notable departure from what had been the ordinary line of British foreign policy ever since the Peace Settlement; and simultaneously the French Government's policy in the same crisis under the Laval régime represented an equally striking apparent departure from the foreign policy which had been pursued by the predecessors of Monsieur Laval at the Quai d'Orsay. What are the factors that account for this apparently anomalous interlude in the history of French foreign policy? Is it to be explained by the personal character and designs of the statesman who during these months dominated French politics—partly by his skill in the twists and turns of the political game, and partly by his simultaneous tenure of the two key-offices of the Presidency of the Council and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs? Or did the French shrink in face of Italy in 1935, as the British shrank in face of Germany in 1936, from the risk of being bombed and gassed in their own home-country in reprisal for a championship of justice and law and order against an aggressor who was not threatening at the moment to make a direct attack on them if for their part they did not insist on fulfilling their international obligations at the aggressor's expense on behalf of a third party?<sup>2</sup> Or is the explanation to be found in the impact upon French foreign policy of two burning questions of French domestic politics—the controversy over the Leagues and the controversy over the Franc—which were at issue contemporaneously with the Italo-Abyssinian question? Or had the French rôle of fidelity to the Covenant been all along no more than a decorous cloak for an anti-German policy—a stage property, which France cherished so long as it served her turn, but which she was all the time prepared to throw off unhesitatingly—regardless of the scandal—if ever the Covenant threatened to change from a useful cover and shield into an entanglement that might defeat France's real purpose—which was simply to keep her German adversary at a disadvantage? Perhaps the true explanation of the apparent deviation in 1935 from the

<sup>1</sup> See section (x), below.

<sup>2</sup> 'Nous étions, en matière de sanctions, "sur le front": c'est nous qui eussions subi des représailles éventuelles; sur Nice et Toulon. La France sentait cela, très fortement.'—Letter dated the 30th May, 1936, from a French correspondent to the writer of this *Survey*.



normal line of French policy is to be found in the combined operation of these several different factors.

Undoubtedly the personal factor, as represented by Monsieur Laval himself, did count for much; for while Monsieur Laval succeeded in carrying with him, at least for the period of his tenure of office, a majority of the elements of the Right, his foreign policy was by no means the orthodox French conservative policy of which the classic exponents had been Messieurs Poincaré and Barthou; and his divagation from the strait way of orthodoxy was advertised by the bitter and unflagging opposition which his policy encountered from certain prominent politicians and journalists whose record as right-wing extremists was beyond reproach. In the political arena, Monsieur Laval was attacked for being a pro-German by Monsieur Franklin-Bouillon as vehemently as he was defended by Monsieur Tardieu for being a pro-Italian, while in the press Monsieur Géraud ('Pertinax') denounced him as vigorously for being a traitor to the post-war Central and East European allies of France as Monsieur de Kerillis commended him for being a servitor of Fascism—a confusion of tongues which was the more piquant inasmuch as both these eminent publicists continued to express their diametrically opposite views on different pages of the same newspaper.

The orthodox French conservative foreign policy—which Monsieur Barthou was pursuing in 1934<sup>1</sup> and would doubtless have continued to pursue had his life not been cut short<sup>2</sup>—was to build up and maintain, within the framework of the League of Nations, a grand alliance of all countries that shared the French fear of Germany to a degree that might incline them to align themselves with France on a common anti-German front. And while the French marshals of this front had been ready to take into the line new recruits—not excluding ex-adherents of the post-war German camp, such as Italy and Russia—if their change of sides appeared to be *bona fide*, the permanent officials of the Quai d'Orsay had prevailed upon Monsieur Barthou in 1934 not to give the cold shoulder to old allies in order to make room for newcomers whose chief credentials were their taller stature and their heavier armament. While Monsieur Barthou had already arranged, before his assassination, to pay the visit to Rome which, in the event, was paid by Monsieur Laval in Monsieur Barthou's place, it was improbable that Monsieur Barthou would have been allowed by his official advisers to woo Italy for his grand alliance at the price of throwing over Jugoslavia.

<sup>1</sup> See the *Survey for 1934*, pp. 339 *seqq.*, 347 *seqq.*, and the *Survey for 1935*, vol. I, Part I, sections (ii) and (iv). <sup>2</sup> See the *Survey for 1934*, pp. 350-1.

It was, no doubt, impossible to prove that this *bassesse* had actually been committed in 1935 by Monsieur Laval; but at the same time it is certain that he was credited with the crime not only by leading statesmen in the Little Entente countries but also by some of the recognized French champions of France's post-war Central and East European allies. Under the Barthou régime, again, the French conservatives of the orthodox school had adopted—albeit against the grain—Monsieur Herriot's policy of a *rapprochement* between France and the Soviet Union,<sup>1</sup> whereas Monsieur Laval came to be denounced as the man who was deliberately preventing France from landing this great fish which his predecessors had hooked—as the man, that is to say, who was sabotaging the ratification of the Franco-Russian treaty of mutual guarantee. To this last charge Monsieur Laval might retort, with a legitimate plaintiveness, that he happened also to be the man who had negotiated and signed this treaty on behalf of France and had made the long journey to Moscow for the sake of confirming the compact. Yet this not unreasonable defence did not disarm Monsieur Laval's critics on this head. In signing the treaty, they maintained, he had merely been carrying to completion, perforce, a transaction which his predecessors had already brought to a point at which it was impossible for their successor to draw back. It was in the postponement of ratification that Monsieur Laval showed his own crooked hand and cloven hoof.

Whatever might be the justice or injustice of these accusations of a sin of omission towards Russia and a sin of commission towards the Little Entente which were levelled at Monsieur Laval by the critics in his own French household, he did strike foreign observers in 1935 as being singularly *insouciant* over the anti-French feeling which his policy was manifestly evoking not only in the Little Entente countries and in Russia, but also in Great Britain. Did Monsieur Laval really believe that the armed support of Italy would be worth more to France, as a help in meeting a possible future attack from Germany, than the combined strength of all these other Powers? Or was his reconciliation with Italy at the expense of other friendships only the first—and the less important—instalment of his foreign policy, and did he mean to follow this up by a reconciliation, on corresponding terms, with Germany likewise?

To win for France the friendship of the two Central European dictatorships, at the price of giving them a free hand, as far as France was concerned, against other European countries—including France's

<sup>1</sup> See the *Survey for 1934*, pp. 381 *seqq.*, and the *Survey for 1935*, vol. i, Part I, section (iv).

own friends and allies—was the policy with which Monsieur Laval was credited by his French enemies. Whether this accusation was well founded was a question which might perhaps never receive an answer, since Monsieur Laval fell from power before the second and more formidable count in the indictment could be either proved or disproved by the march of events. And the historian is reduced to speculations suggested by the undoubted fact that Monsieur Laval did appear to show a much slighter susceptibility than most other Frenchmen at the time—including many of his own supporters—to the threat that if France, under his leadership, persisted in wrecking the collective system and betraying her old friends, she might wake up one day to find that a composite feeling of disgust and indignation and alarm had led Great Britain and Yugoslavia and Rumania to follow Poland's example of making their own separate peace with Herr Hitler. Why was it that Monsieur Laval's flesh could not be made to creep as readily as the flesh of other Frenchmen by this horrid prognostication?<sup>1</sup> Was it, perchance, that the man who controlled France's destinies in 1935 intended to thrust his own Marianne into Herr Hitler's arms before Britannia could find her way to an asylum where there was evidently not room for more than one lady at a time to take shelter?

If Monsieur Laval did see in his reconciliation with Italy a step towards a similar reconciliation with Germany, he was probably in a minority among his own countrymen at the time. A more prevalent feeling in France in 1935 seems to have been that the reconciliation with Italy was of value to France as a help not for making friends with Germany but for meeting another German attack. Even if the Italians were to fail to perform all that they boasted themselves capable of performing in the way of opposing by force of arms a German assault upon the independence of Austria,<sup>2</sup> their new comradeship-in-arms

<sup>1</sup> The writer of this *Survey* can testify at first hand to the normal efficacy of this bogey in giving the creeps to Frenchmen in 1935—having tried it, himself, on several of them in the course of the year.

<sup>2</sup> In 1935 it seemed in the—perhaps prejudiced—eyes of British observers that the French were considerably over-estimating the military effectiveness of Italy, and under-estimating that of Great Britain, as alternative allies of France in a future war against Germany, in the light of the two countries' respective performances in the war of 1914-18. In the course of that year the writer often called to mind a railway journey from Geneva to Le Havre which he had had occasion to make a few nights after the Italian line had been broken by the Germans at Caporetto. The opposite seat in the railway carriage was occupied by a long-legged French captain of heavy artillery whose battery had been sent away from the Italian front, as superfluous, by the Italian General Staff only a few weeks before. And the night was not long enough to allow this disgusted French officer to rehearse all the variations on

with France would at any rate release French troops from service along the Alps for service along the Rhine.

There was, however, in 1935 a powerful body of opinion in France which blessed Monsieur Laval's good understanding with Signor Mussolini not so much on account of any military value which it might be expected to have for France in a future war with Germany, but rather on account of its expected effect in a struggle on the French home front. For there were Frenchmen who hoped that the Franco-Italian entente would give 'the Leagues' the victory in their competition with the 'Front Populaire' and would thereby bring France over from the Parliamentary-Democratic into the Dictatorial-Fascist camp.

The Fascist-minded political leagues in France—first and foremost, Colonel de la Rocque's Croix de Feu, which was the largest and the strongest, though the most moderate, of the batch<sup>1</sup>—had sprung into prominence with startling suddenness in February 1934, when they had taken a leading hand in the disorders in the streets in Paris which had quite unconstitutionally driven Monsieur Daladier's Radical-Socialist Government out of office. The Leagues had then retired again temporarily into the background under the impeccably conservative régime of the elder statesman Monsieur Doumergue. But when Monsieur Doumergue made way for Monsieur Flandin on the 8th November, 1934, and Monsieur Flandin in his turn for Monsieur Laval on the 31st May, 1935, in the Presidency of the Council of French Ministers, the Leagues began to raise their heads once more; and throughout the latter half of the year 1935 they occupied attention, and excited emotion, in France which might otherwise perhaps have been directed to the Italo-Abyssinian issue. The French Left were distracted from their hostility to Fascism abroad by a lively fear that they might succumb, overnight, to a kindred Fascism at home, while conversely the French Right were led to support Signor Mussolini with a more than double enthusiasm because they saw in him not merely a future ally against Germany but also a present patron of their domestic ambition to transform France from a parliamentary into a Fascist state. It would be difficult to say whether the Leagues' hopes of victory in 1935 were as lively as the Front Populaire's fears of defeat; but these

his opinion of the Italians' military qualities. If that officer were still alive, what opinion, the writer often wondered, was he expressing about Italian military efficiency in 1935?

<sup>1</sup> See a series of articles, under the general title of *Les Liges et les groupements*, by Monsieur R. Millet and Monsieur S. Arbellot, in *Le Temps*, 24th, 27th, 28th and 29th January; 3rd, 4th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 17th, 18th, 19th and 21st February; 3rd, 14th and 24th March; and 23rd, 24th and 26th April, 1935.

French Fascists seemed to respond with a remarkable sensitiveness to their Italian patron's successive changes of mood. In the second quarter of the year, when Signor Mussolini (as far as can be judged)<sup>1</sup> was coming to the decision to put his fortunes to the touch in an attempt to conquer an African empire, the French Leagues seem to have been inflamed, in sympathy, with an ambition to make themselves the dominant political force in France. The second half of the year, during which Signor Mussolini was in the mood to defy the World, was also the time when the French Leagues were displaying their greatest truculence. Thereafter the surprising subsidence of the Leagues in December 1935<sup>2</sup> was followed by a passing decline of

<sup>1</sup> See p. 30, above.

<sup>2</sup> In the event, the year 1935 was not celebrated in France by a march on Paris in the style of Signor Mussolini's march on Rome in October 1922; and since it was the weakness of Fascist movements that they must either advance or retreat but could never stand still, the penalty for the French Leagues' failure to strike when the moment arrived was the collapse of their power. In the French Chamber on the 6th December, 1935, under Monsieur Laval's stage-management, the representatives of the Leagues and of the Socialists and Communists reciprocally announced their agreement that their respective militant organizations should disarm and dissolve—a reciprocity which saved the Leagues' face without causing much inconvenience to the Socialists and Communists, who, as a matter of fact, had not built up any equivalent 'private armies'. After this demonstration of sweet reasonableness on both sides, Monsieur Laval tabled three Bills. 'The first Bill provided that any person found carrying a weapon or an object dangerous to public safety at a public meeting or demonstration or on the occasion thereof should be liable to a fine of from 100 f. to 1,000 f. and imprisonment for [from] three months to two years. The second Bill declared that all associations or *de facto* groups other than those approved for military training should be declared illegal and thereby dissolved if they acquired, through some military form or organization, the character of fighting bodies or private militia, if they caused armed demonstrations or acts which might disturb the peace, and if their aim was to impair the integrity of the national territory or the republican form of government. The third Bill added incitement to murder to the offences punishable by existing legislation on the freedom of the press.' (*The Times*, 7th December, 1935.) In the following vote on a motion of confidence the Government obtained a majority of 132 (351 votes to 219). Two days later, on the 8th December, 1935, the Chamber passed, by 408 votes to 179, amended texts of the Bills which were much more invidious than Monsieur Laval's original drafts; but the Leagues submitted meekly to this unpleasantly sharpened legislation. The Laws were promulgated and came into force on the 12th January, 1936.

On the 13th February, Monsieur Léon Blum was assaulted in the street by members of the Camelots du Roi and on the same day the President of the Republic signed a decree ordering the dissolution of the Camelots du Roi, the Ligue d'Action Française, and the Students' Federation which was associated with the Action Française. Four months later, the Government which had been formed by Monsieur Blum on the 4th June decided upon the dissolution of the remaining Leagues; and decrees which were signed on the 18th June and promulgated on the following day dissolved the Croix de Feu, the Jeunesses Patriotes, and the Solidarité Française.

Signor Mussolini's star which was observable at the turn of the calendar year. This homage of the French Fascists to Signor Mussolini in 1935—which reminded a historian of the relation between the Prussian reactionaries and the Czar Nicholas I a hundred years earlier—was evidently a factor of considerable effect in determining the direction of French foreign policy under Monsieur Laval's régime.

There were, of course, other considerations which inclined a large section of French public opinion, at any rate for the time, to support Monsieur Laval's policy of treating Signor Mussolini's breach of the Covenant with the utmost leniency. While France had recently been drawn towards Italy by the conclusion of the Franco-Italian Pact of the 7th January, she had still more recently been alienated from Great Britain by the signature, on the 18th June, of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement—the reception of which in France has been described in another context.<sup>1</sup> Again, the French were inhibited from taking Italy's aggression against Abyssinia to heart by the narrowness of their political horizon, which hardly extended beyond the boundaries of Europe—notwithstanding the fact that France at this time stood second only to Great Britain as a colonial Power, and that she had possessions and interests all over the World, and nowhere on a larger scale than in Africa. In spite of this, the French were apt to think of the League of Nations as an essentially European organization, and, more than that, as an organization which was designed to operate against one, and only one, European Power. In fact, the essential function of the League, in French eyes, was to mobilize the rest of Europe in support of France in the event of France again being attacked by Germany; and the obsession of France by her fear of Germany counted for more, in determining French policy towards the Italo-Abyssinian conflict in 1935, than all the above-mentioned considerations taken together.

To English minds at this time it seemed evident that the most likely way to deter Germany from committing any act of aggression that she might be contemplating would be to give her an object lesson with Italy as the *corpus vile*. For if once it could be shown that one (even the weakest) of the Great Powers was unable to repudiate its obligations under the Covenant with impunity, then other Great Powers (even the strongest) might shrink from challenging a system of collective security which had thus approved itself in action. In other circumstances the French might perhaps have rejoiced to see English minds thinking in so rationally French a fashion; but in 1935

<sup>1</sup> See the *Survey for 1935*, vol. i, Part I, section (vi) (4).

the French were inhibited by fear—as the English usually were by intellectual laziness—from taking long views. Indeed, by this time, the French were too thoroughly frightened to be capable any longer of taking even the elementary precaution of concealing their trepidation; and so, in this critical hour, they exposed themselves to the eyes of an astonished world in the most perilous of all postures: the posture of the rabbit which crouches, paralysed by terror, under the malignant spell of the advancing stoat. The disintegrating effect of German rearmament upon French *moral* was an aid to Signor Mussolini, in his African adventure, which was as valuable as it was unintended.

#### (e) THE BRITISH STANDPOINT

As depicted by Italian pencils, the British in 1935 cut an odious figure; for, according to Signor Gayda and other writers in the Italian press, the British attitude towards Signor Mussolini's East African enterprise was a supreme example of 'British hypocrisy'.

The Italian critics of British policy denounced as utterly insincere the current British professions of devotion to the League of Nations and faithfulness to British obligations under the Covenant and sympathy for a weak nation which was being attacked by a strong neighbour. In reality, so the Italians would have it, the British cared for none of these things; their motive in putting these principles forward was simply to place the Italians in an unfavourable light and to decoy the other states members of the League into ranging themselves, against their own true interests and intentions, in support of certain concrete British interests for which these lofty British professions provided a screen. The true reason (so the Italians proclaimed) for Great Britain's determination to thwart Italy's East African plans was her anxiety to retain an exclusive British control over the sea-passage from England through the Red Sea and over the water-supply for the irrigation of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan from the source of the Blue Nile in Lake Tana. These alleged British motives were denounced, by the Italians who attributed them to British minds, as being both selfish and otiose and futile. The motives were selfish because the interests were not of an order of magnitude that would justify Whitehall, on the strength of them, in blocking the sole avenue to the acquisition of a colonial empire that remained open to Italy. They were otiose because the local British vested interests—at any rate the British hydrographical interests in that portion of the basin of the Blue Nile that lay in Abyssinian territory—were already safeguarded by existing treaties to which Italy, as well as Great Britain,

was a party.<sup>1</sup> Finally these British motives were futile because—at any rate in the matter of the naval control over the passage to India—Italy already held Great Britain at her mercy. It was idle for the British to seek to prevent an increase of Italian naval power in the Red Sea when, owing to the invention of flying, the British Navy had already forfeited to the Italian Air Force that command over the channel between the north-western and the south-eastern basin of the Mediterranean which had formerly been dominated by the British naval base at Malta. Thus, on Italian showing, there was as little to be said for British policy from the British as from the Italian point of view. The true British interest, as expounded by Italian publicists, lay rather in winning the lasting gratitude of England's old friend Italy by maintaining a benevolent neutrality while Italy sated her colonial appetite at the expense, not of the British Empire, but of a third party whom the British, after all, had no reason to love.

This last Italian point was based on the experience, which the British had shared with Abyssinia's two other neighbours the Italians and the French, of Abyssinian raids across the border in quest of game or slaves. These Abyssinian forays had gradually become more serious as the ample territories which had fallen to the Ethiopian Empire in the partition of Africa had been occupied progressively, up to the agreed international frontiers, by Amharan feudal chiefs whom the Government at Addis Ababa found it easier to commission than to control. This nuisance was not an exclusively Abyssinian phenomenon; for the Lion of the Tribe of Judah was not the only shareholder in the territorial spoils of the Dark Continent who had found it difficult to assert *de facto* a sovereignty which had been recognized by other share-holders *de jure*. In the Italian colony of Libya, for instance, a European Government had experienced similar difficulties in making its writ run in the wilderness; and in the eastern portion of this Italian domain the Sanūsīyah had for many years made themselves as obnoxious to the Egyptian authorities on the other side of the frontier as to the Italian authorities whose title to the Libyan oases the Sanūsīyah refused to recognize. In the history of Africa during the preceding half-century such situations had been not uncommon. At the same time, the nuisance and the scandal of the Abyssinian raids into foreign territories had come, during the post-war period, to stand in a class apart in some respects. In the first place, these Abyssinian raids were mostly perpetrated by—or at least under the auspices of—chieftains who were the representatives

<sup>1</sup> See the *Survey for 1929*, pp. 213–16, 218 *seqq.*, and the present volume, pp. 27, above, and 193, footnote 3, below.



of the Abyssinian Government and not rebels against its authority. In the second place, they were peculiarly iniquitous inasmuch as the principal quarry in view was not game or even cattle but slaves. In the third place, this Abyssinian nuisance showed no sign of abating—in contrast to the Sanūsī nuisance, which had been thoroughly, though belatedly, put down, between the years 1922 and 1928 by effective Italian military operations.<sup>1</sup>

These Abyssinian raids were a greater plague for the British Empire than for Italy or France in proportion to the greater length of the frontiers, marching with Abyssinian territory, for the policing of which the British authorities were responsible. The total length of Abyssinia's common frontiers with territories under British administration—the British Kenya Colony, the British Somaliland Protectorate, and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan—was about 1,900 miles, as against about 1,100 miles of common frontiers between Abyssinia and the two Italian colonies of Eritrea and Somalia, and only about 200 between Abyssinia and the enclave of French territory round Tajura Bay.<sup>2</sup> The extent to which some of these adjoining British territories suffered from Abyssinian incursions during the post-war years may be gauged from the record presented in three British parliamentary papers<sup>3</sup>—the two most recent of which were quoted verbatim in the appendix to the memorandum on the situation in Ethiopia, dated the 4th September, 1935, which was presented by the Italian Government to the League of Nations.<sup>4</sup> The second of these British official documents included a return of 139 raids, all told, that had been made into five provinces of the Sudan, four districts of Kenya, and also into British Somaliland, during the years 1916 to 1927 inclusive, with notes of the identity of the perpetrators, the scene of action, the nature and amount of the loot, and the number of the casualties on either side. No comparable loss, injury, trouble or expense was inflicted during the same period by Abyssinian hands upon the territories, administrators and *ressortissants* of Italy or France.<sup>5</sup> Yet the British Government never thought of making this very serious nuisance a *casus belli*. They recognized that the raids were perpetrated

<sup>1</sup> For the earlier stages of these operations, see the *Survey for 1925*, vol. i, pp. 102-3; see also F. lo Bello: 'Les premiers dix ans de l'Occupation italienne en Cyrénaïque' (in *L'Afrique Française*, April 1925, pp. 178-84).

<sup>2</sup> These figures are inexact, since a great part of the Italo-Abyssinian frontiers was still undelimited in 1935.

<sup>3</sup> *Cmd.* 2553 of 1925; *Cmd.* 3217 of 1928; *Cmd.* 4153 of 1932.

<sup>4</sup> Official English translation in *League of Nations Official Journal*, November 1935, pp. 1355-1568.

<sup>5</sup> For the Abyssinian raids into Italian territory during the years 1923 to 1935 inclusive, see pp. 131-3, below.

against the will of the nominally responsible Government at Addis Ababa; and they believed that the most effective, as well as the most equitable, way of dealing with this evil was to maintain friendly relations with that Government and to support, as far as possible, their manifestly sincere endeavours to impose law and order upon their turbulent outlying vassals on the fringes of the Ethiopian Empire.

It is true that a more militant intention, *vis-à-vis* Abyssinia, was attributed to Great Britain, on the strength of what seemed flimsy evidence, in one of the earliest articles in Signor Gayda's anti-British press campaign in the *Giornale d'Italia*.<sup>1</sup> To an English reader, however, this accusation read less like a bona fide indictment than like a transparent attempt to excuse in advance the militant action which by that time Signor Mussolini had made up his mind to take against Abyssinia; for the Italian Government would have fore-armed themselves against British criticism if they could have shown that they were merely anticipating the British Government in the execution of designs which were also cherished by the British themselves. In the same breath the Italian publicist charged his British bugbears with making preparations to attack Abyssinia and with supplying munitions of war to the Abyssinian Government! Did Signor Gayda and his compatriots genuinely believe in their own diatribe in their heart of hearts? Or were they constrained to cast Great Britain for the rôle of the villain of the piece because this was the only alternative to accepting this rôle for themselves? Manifestly it was impossible that Italy could be handsomely in the right unless Great Britain were flagrantly in the wrong. At this point observation passes over into conjecture; and it may be more profitable to turn from these Italian interpretations of the British standpoint to the picture as it presented itself in British eyes.

One important element in this picture was eventually brought to light by Signor Gayda himself when, in the *Giornale d'Italia* of the 20th February, 1936, he published—partly verbatim and partly in the form of a *précis*—the contents of a confidential British state paper which had fallen into Italian hands.<sup>2</sup> The history of this document—which may be assumed, in default of a British *démenti*, to have been more or less accurately reproduced in Signor Gayda's Italian version—was divulged in the House of Commons at Westminster on the 24th

<sup>1</sup> See the *Giornale d'Italia*, 22nd and 24th May, 1935.

<sup>2</sup> See Mr. Eden's statements in the House of Commons at Westminster on the 24th February, 1936. The British Secretary of State did not deny the authenticity of the document; and he admitted that it had come into Signor Gayda's hands by 'theft or disappearance', 'through an indiscretion or a deliberate breach of confidence'.

February, 1936, by Mr. Eden, who was at that time Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in the Government of the United Kingdom.

Towards the end of January 1935, when the Abyssinian situation was already a cause of preoccupation to His Majesty's Government as a member of the Council of the League, an inquiry was made by the Italian Government as to the nature and extent of British interests in Abyssinia. An Inter-Departmental Committee was thereupon set up, under the chairmanship of the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, for the purpose of estimating British interests in Abyssinia and of attempting an appreciation of the extent to which these interests might be affected by external events. . . . It was in no sense the task of this Committee to deal with His Majesty's Government's obligations under the Covenant or to attempt to frame a policy for His Majesty's Government in what had by that time come to be the possibility of serious trouble between Italy and Abyssinia. Had it been otherwise the Committee would have been differently constituted. It was merely concerned to establish facts.

The Committee's investigation naturally occupied some time, and in the ultimate event no specific reply was returned to the Italian inquiry, owing to the fact that, by the time the examination was completed, the rapid development of Italian activities in regard to Abyssinia was beginning to raise the whole question of the integrity of Abyssinia, as to which any personal interests were naturally subordinated to our obligations as a member of the League.

The Committee reported to the then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs on the 18th June last, and its report was to the effect that there was no important British interest in Abyssinia with the exception of Lake Tsana, the waters of the Blue Nile, and certain tribal grazing rights.

According to Signor Gayda's version of the report, the committee considered, not only what the local British interests in Abyssinia were, but also how these interests would be affected in the event of an Italian conquest of the Ethiopian Empire. According to Signor Gayda, the second and third of the nine principal conclusions of the report were to the following effect:

(2) There are no vital British interests in Abyssinia or adjoining countries such as to necessitate British resistance to an Italian conquest of Abyssinia. Italian control of Abyssinia would on some grounds be advantageous, on others disadvantageous. In general, as far as local British interests are concerned, it would be a matter of indifference whether Abyssinia remained independent or was absorbed by Italy.

(3) From the standpoint of Imperial defence, an independent Abyssinia would be preferable to an Italian Abyssinia, but the threat to British interests appears distant and would depend only on a war against Italy, which for the moment appears improbable.

In British eyes Signor Gayda's revelation appeared to refute the Italian publicist's own contention that the British championship of

the Covenant masked a selfish concern for local British interests, and to bear out the British contention that the professed motive of British policy was in fact the genuine motive on which the British Government and the British public were acting. As Mr. Eden put it at the close of the statement quoted above,

This . . . is precisely the consideration which has underlain every authoritative statement of the policy of His Majesty's Government in the Italo-Ethiopian dispute. That policy has been inspired by no selfish or ulterior motive, but solely by consideration of the duties incumbent on His Majesty's Government as a member of the League of Nations and as whole-hearted supporters of the doctrine of collective security.

At the same time, in seeking to account for the policy which was actually pursued by the British Government, most candid-minded British observers would have readily admitted—and this whether they were supporters of the Government's policy or opponents of it—that, in setting themselves to carry out a substantial part of their obligations under the Covenant, and in accepting such risks as were involved in executing the Covenant to this limited extent, the British Government were moved in part by the consideration of one British interest which was of supreme importance in the eyes of all intelligent British statesmen and students of affairs. This acknowledged British interest, however, was not one of those which had been comprised within the terms of reference of Sir John Maffey's committee, nor was it one of those which had attracted the attention of Italian critics; for it was not a local interest connected with the Red Sea and the Blue Nile or even with the Black Continent and 'the White Man's Burden', but a general interest of world-wide range; and it was not a material interest but one of a social and juridical character. This supreme British interest, which undoubtedly did count for much in the determination of British policy towards the Italo-Abyssinian conflict, was an interest in the maintenance, in the realm of international relations, of the recently and precariously asserted rule of international law and order—particularly as this was embodied in the Covenant and in the constitution of the League of Nations.

Embracing, as it did at this time, approximately one-quarter of the population and one-fifth of the land-surface of the globe, the British Empire was scattered over the face of the planet; and it was no longer strategically defensible, in its totality, against a possible coalition of predatory Powers. It had been put together in an age when all the Great Powers of the World, apart from Great Britain herself, were to be found within the boundaries of the Continent of Europe, and when the British sea-power which insulated the European Continent

from the British Isles and from the Overseas World was stronger than the aggregate sea-power of the Continental European countries—supposing that they could ever have sunk their own rivalries and quarrels to the point of combining against the United Kingdom. On the other hand, in 1935 the British Empire was only one of three principal naval Powers in the post-war world; and both of the other two—the United States and Japan—lay outside Europe in strategic positions from which they could take the British Empire in the rear in the event of a conflict. At the same time the conquest of the air had robbed Great Britain herself of her immemorially old strategic insularity and had welded her on to the rest of Europe 'by ties as light as air and as strong as links of iron'.<sup>1</sup> With her dense population, her far gone urbanization and industrialization, and the location of her vast capital city in the corner of the island that lay nearest to the Continent, Great Britain was peculiarly exposed to the danger of air attack. In fact, London, with the estuary of the Thames as a gigantic natural pointer for the pilots of hostile aircraft, was perhaps in deadlier peril from the air than any other great city in the World at this time. Nor was the delicacy of the British Empire's condition at this date merely external and strategic. The Empire was also in the throes of an immense internal metamorphosis through which it was changing itself from a collection of colonies, dependencies and protectorates of the United Kingdom into a commonwealth of nations freely associated on a footing of equality. When this transformation was complete, the Empire-turned-Commonwealth might look forward to becoming stronger than ever before. But so long as the process lasted—and it was bound to be slow—it manifestly rendered the whole organism peculiarly vulnerable.

In these new circumstances it was evidently not unreasonable for British statesmen to take the view that the legitimate security of the British Empire could not be assured by any less sweeping or less ambitious measure than that of assuring the security of the whole world-wide society of which the British Empire itself was so large and so ubiquitous a member. It might be argued that the British Empire could not, in the post-war circumstances, feel safe from the peril of some lawless, and perhaps fatal, attack unless and until the ancient international anarchy were effectively put down and the reign of law established over the whole field of international relations. It might also be argued that this supreme British interest

<sup>1</sup> Lord Grey of Fallodon: speech broadcast on the 14th November, 1924, quoted in *The Conduct of British Empire Foreign Relations since the Peace Settlement*, p. 7.

was also the supreme interest of the whole World, inasmuch as international law and order were in the true interests of the whole of Mankind and of all the parochial states among which the living generation was partitioned—whereas the desire to perpetuate the reign of violence in international affairs was an anti-social desire which was not even in the ultimate interests of the citizens of the handful of states that officially professed this benighted and anachronistic creed. For British statesmanship, the case for throwing the weight of British power and influence into the international scales on the side of world order was equally cogent from the domestic standpoint, since there were strong reasons for holding that the British Commonwealth of Nations could only perfect and maintain itself within the wider framework of an international League of Nations, and that their common international obligations as fellow states members of the League were likely in future to be the chief practical bonds between the several Commonwealth countries.<sup>1</sup>

This was not only a reasonable British policy; it was also, during the period under review, the actual policy of His Britannic Majesty's several Governments in the United Kingdom and in the other self-governing dominions of the British Crown (notwithstanding a certain difference of emphasis and outlook between different members of the Cabinet at Westminster, and a momentary lapse of some days' duration in December 1935 when the Cabinet at Westminster was supporting 'the Laval-Hoare Peace Plan'). In a parliamentary democratic state it ought in theory to be a matter of course that the Government's policy should correspond to the will of a majority of the electorate; and in the case in point the mastery of the people over the Government was duly proved to be a reality by a sensational demonstration of the prevailing public opinion—a demonstration which recalled the Government, after a short term of truancy, to the line of policy which they had previously been following in execution of the people's will. In this cogent and convincing way the element

<sup>1</sup> The importance of this consideration is noticed by two acute French observers, Monsieur P. Vaucher and Monsieur P.-H. Sériex, in *L'Opinion Britannique, la Société des Nations et la guerre italo-éthiopienne*—Publication du Centre d'Études de Politique Étrangère, Section d'Information, No. 2 (Paris, 1936, Hartmann), p. 92. It had already come to light in the discussions at an unofficial conference of representatives of six out of seven states members of the British Commonwealth that was held at Toronto in September 1933 (see *British Commonwealth Relations: Proceedings of the First Unofficial Conference held at Toronto, 11th to 21st September, 1933*, edited by A. J. Toynbee [Oxford University Press, 1934]). Finally the point was driven home in a letter of the 9th April from a distinguished Canadian correspondent, Mr. J. M. Macdonell, which was published in *The Times* on the 21st April, 1936.

in the United Kingdom that was in favour of at least a partial fulfilment of the League Covenant in respect of the Italo-Abyssinian conflict made it clear that it was in a strong majority.

At the same time the British nation was not unanimously in favour of the policy which constitutionally prevailed. For the eventual benefit of averting more serious future risks—which was this policy's principal aim—had to be paid for in advance at the price of incurring present risks which might be smaller in themselves but which were nevertheless more unpleasant at the moment by reason of their closer imminence. The British advocates of the long-range policy of fulfilling the Covenant were opposed by British advocates of a short-range policy of avoiding even the slightest risk of involving the British Empire in war here and now. According to this opposing view—which coincided in large measure with a view put forward by Signor Mussolini<sup>1</sup>—an immediate war between European Great Powers was the greatest conceivable calamity into which the World could fall; and it followed that this calamity ought to be staved off at almost any price—even at the price of tolerating an unjust and illegal aggression on the part of a Great Power against a weak country, and at the still heavier price of encouraging all other predatorily inclined Great Powers to do likewise on the strength of a practical demonstration that the supreme international crime could be committed with impunity. The gist of this policy was to make sure of avoiding a present evil while leaving the future to take care of itself; and it might have been supposed that its advocates would all have been adherents to some single school of political philosophy. In fact, however, this 'anti-League' policy found support at both of the two extremities of the British political gamut—from the 'Pacifists' on the extreme Left and from the 'Die-hards' on the extreme Right,<sup>2</sup> who, to their mutual surprise, now found themselves directing their fire no longer at one another but at the 'Sanctionist' majority in between them, while the 'Sanctionists' were equally surprised to find themselves engaged independently by two different enemies from opposite flanks.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See p. 20, above.

<sup>2</sup> 'Il est donc vraiment paradoxal de qualifier d'impérialiste un mouvement d'opinion que les représentants attitrés de l'impérialisme ont tout fait pour conjurer.'—Vaucher and Sirieux, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

<sup>3</sup> It is perhaps also worth mentioning that an isolationism—in the spirit of the rhetorical question 'Am I my brother's keeper?'—was being preached to the newspaper readers of the United Kingdom, year in and year out, with all the artifices of a latter-day journalistic technique, in the newspapers owned by Lord Rothermere and Lord Beaverbrook. In the formation of British public feeling and opinion on foreign affairs, this isolationist drum fire from

Even the most summary survey of British policy towards the Italo-Abyssinian dispute would be incomplete without a glance at the consolidation of the 'Sanctionist' bloc of opinion as a result of the so-called 'Peace Ballot'<sup>1</sup> which had been launched in the United Kingdom in 1934; at the influence of the results of the Peace Ballot upon the policy of the Government, at the split between 'Sanctionists' and 'Pacifists', and the *rapprochement* between 'Pacifists' and 'Die-hards', which were brought to light by the Peace Ballot and which came to a head, when the international crisis arrived, both in the proceedings at political party conferences and in the letters published in the press; and finally at the second demonstration of the strength of the 'Sanctionist' feeling in the country, when it compelled Mr. Baldwin, in December 1935, to abandon his support of 'the Laval-Hoare Peace Plan'.

The British National Peace Ballot was a private enterprise which was set on foot in March 1934 by the League of Nations Union and was eventually carried out by a National Declaration Committee representing not only the Union itself but also thirty-eight other private organizations for public ends which had accepted an invitation to co-operate with the Union for this purpose. The Ballot was held on the following questionnaire, which was voted upon on and after the 12th November, 1934:

1. Should Great Britain remain a member of the League of Nations?
2. Are you in favour of an all-round reduction in armaments by international agreement?
3. Are you in favour of an all-round abolition of national military and naval aircraft by international agreement?
4. Should the manufacture and sale of armaments for private profit be prohibited by international agreement?
5. Do you consider that, if a nation insists on attacking another, the other nations should combine to compel it to stop by
  - (a) Economic and non-military measures?
  - (b) If necessary, military measures?

Widespread public attention was first called to this undertaking by a correspondence—published in the press during the fourth week in July—between Lord Cecil of Chelwood, who was one of the principal promoters of the Ballot, and the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the National Union of Conservative and Unionist

innumerable rolls of news-print was an imponderable factor the importance of which it was peculiarly difficult to estimate. The relation between the physical circulation of newspapers and the psychological effect of their contents was one of the sociological mysteries of the Great Society of the day.

<sup>1</sup> For a brilliant account of the Peace Ballot by two discerning French observers, see *op. cit.*, pp. 31-51.



Associations, Colonel George Herbert. This correspondence arose out of the latter body's refusal of the League of Nations Union's invitation to co-operate—an invitation which the League of Nations Union, as a non-party organization incorporated under a Royal Charter, had addressed to the party organizations of all the three political parties of the United Kingdom. Colonel Herbert formulated objections, in an ascending order of seriousness, to questions 3, 4, and 5;<sup>1</sup> and his comment on the last was so closely relevant to the issue which actually arose next year between Great Britain and Italy, after Italy had insisted upon attacking Abyssinia, that it deserves quotation:

This, too, does not seem to be so phrased as to give a possibility to the uninformed voter of arriving at a well-balanced judgement on the subject. He is asked whether, if one nation insists upon attacking another, the other nations should compel it to stop by (a) economic and non-military measures, and (b), if necessary, military measures. The impression which is given is that it might be quite possible for a nation to impose an economic blockade with certainty that it would not lead to war. This is, in fact, not the case. The imposition of an economic blockade might very well lead to such a situation that war was the inevitable result. In fact, it would in reality be impossible to vote for (a) without being ready also to vote for (b). Yet this is not explained.

The attitude adopted by Colonel Herbert's organization was supported on the 27th July in a leading article in *The Times*, in which a douche of cold water was poured upon the projected Ballot from the point of view of persons who

genuinely regard the whole business as a deplorable waste of time and effort, and perhaps even as being of doubtful assistance to the cause of peace. The completed document, in their honest opinion, would have not the very smallest practical effect even if it were signed by every man, woman, and child in every town and village in the land.

This article was a testimony to the public importance of the Ballot and to the private embarrassment of those elements in the Conservative Party that were unwilling to associate themselves with it. There was evidently some force in their contention that the questions were being presented in a misleadingly simplified form and that a great majority of the voters would be incompetent to make any serious judgment on the real issues; but this contention—which might have been put forward without inconsistency by an authoritarian single-party organization in a totalitarian state—came awkwardly from a body which existed precisely for the purpose of canvassing the elec-

<sup>1</sup> See the text of his explanatory letter, circulated to all constituency organizations, in *The Times*, 24th July, 1934.

torate on all manner of public questions, many of which were certainly not less intricate than those that were now being put before the self-same electorate by the National Declaration Committee. Colonel Herbert and his friends were also visibly embarrassed at finding themselves constrained, by their objections to the terms of the questionnaire, to refuse co-operation in an undertaking which was admittedly being launched by its promoters out of genuine enthusiasm for what was recognized to be a non-party national cause, when the other two party organizations were co-operating with alacrity. The degree of this embarrassment could be measured by that of the resentment which visibly accompanied it. As the canvassing went on, this hostility spread to higher spheres, and on the 8th November the Ballot received an even greater recognition than had been given to it in *The Times* on the 27th July: it was attacked in the House of Commons at Westminster by the Foreign Secretary, Sir John Simon, with the support of Sir Austen Chamberlain. A more bitter onslaught was delivered by the First Lord of the Admiralty, Sir Bolton Eyres-Monsell, in a letter to the Chairman of the Evesham Divisional Conservative Association;<sup>1</sup> the Foreign Secretary returned to the attack on the 22nd November in the House of Commons; and at a Conservative meeting at Glasgow on the 23rd November Mr. Stanley Baldwin—at that time leader of the Conservative Party and Lord President of the Council in His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom—denounced the Peace Ballot in even stronger terms and took this as a text for the following diatribe against 'a collective peace system'.

It is curious that there is growing among the Labour Party support for what is called a collective peace system. A collective peace system, in my view, is perfectly impracticable in view of the fact to-day that the United States is not yet, to our unbounded regret, a member of the League of Nations and that in the last two or three years two Great Powers, Germany and Japan, have both retired from it. It is hardly worth considering when those be the facts. A collective peace system would never be undertaken without those countries. Of that I am certain, and, so long as I have any responsibility in a Government for deciding whether or not this country shall join in a collective peace system, I will say this: never as an individual will I sanction the British Navy being used for an armed blockade of any country in the world until I know what the United States of America is going to do.

This passage reads strangely in the light of the fact that the country of whose Government the speaker was at this time an important member was—and had been for nearly fifteen years past—a state member of the League of Nations; but it reads more strangely

<sup>1</sup> See an extract from this letter in *The Times*, 17th November, 1934.

still in the light of the policy which was actually adopted next year by the same Mr. Baldwin as Prime Minister.

Meanwhile the undertaking went steadily on and grew, in the process, to dimensions which perhaps surprised even the promoters. The cost of the headquarters organization alone was £12,000, which was raised partly by the participating organizations and partly by individual subscriptions; over and above this, each local committee met its own expenses; and the detailed work of canvassing and of distributing and collecting the papers was performed by voluntary unpaid workers whose number totalled half a million. The actual distribution of the voting papers began on the 12th November, 1934, and the figures of the result were announced by Lord Cecil on the 27th June, 1935, at a meeting in the Albert Hall. The figures speak for themselves:—

<i>Question.</i>	<i>Yes.</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Doubtful.</i>	<i>Abstentions.</i>
1	11,090,387	355,883	10,470	102,425
2	10,470,489	862,775	12,062	213,839
3	9,533,558	1,689,786	16,976	318,845
4	10,417,329	775,415	15,076	351,345
5 a	10,027,608	635,074	27,255	855,107
5 b	6,784,368	2,351,981	40,893	2,364,441
<i>Total votes</i>				11,559,165.

On Questions 5 a and 5 b the statement 'I accept the Christian Pacifist attitude' was allowed as an alternative to the answer 'Yes' or 'No'. On Question 5 a 14,121 votes of this kind were recorded and 17,482 on Question 5 b.

The total number of votes cast represented more than 37·9 per cent. of the total number of voters over the age of eighteen in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and perhaps fifty per cent. of the voters who had been actually canvassed. These were astonishing figures for a private enterprise which had been carried out without either the official organization or the artificially stimulated excitement of a general election. But the size of the total vote, remarkable though it was, was still not so significant as the strength of the majorities in favour of an affirmative answer to all six questions. Even the formidable Question 5 b, on sanctions of a military character, was answered in favour of applying collective military sanctions, if necessary, by nearly three affirmative votes to every one adverse vote and one abstention, while in favour of economic sanctions there were nearly sixteen times as many affirmative votes as adverse votes, and more than eleven times as many affirmative votes as abstentions.

The political significance of these results was revealed by the almost

ludicrously frank precipitancy with which the leading members of the United Kingdom Government now changed their tune. Already before the end of the calendar year 1934 Sir John Simon—in a letter<sup>1</sup> regarding the Peace Ballot which was addressed to the Honorary Secretary of the Gildersome Branch of the League of Nations Union—was protesting that, in his speeches in the House of Commons on the 8th and the 22nd November, he had never expressed himself as opposed to the Ballot as a whole, but had confined his criticisms to Question 4. And it was in vain that, on the 28th June, 1935—the morning after the announcement of the result in the Albert Hall—*The Times* devoted another leading article to belittling the Ballot as ‘barren’ even though ‘impressive’. The leader-writer’s thesis that the Government had ‘learnt nothing that it did not know already’ was decisively refuted when, on the 23rd July, 1935, a deputation from the National Declaration Committee, headed by Lord Cecil and the Dean of Chichester, was received by Mr. Baldwin (now Prime Minister) in the company of Sir Samuel Hoare (Sir John Simon’s successor at the Foreign Office)<sup>2</sup> and Mr. Anthony Eden (the Minister for League of Nations Affairs, who was destined, within less than six months from this date, to be borne by the tide of those eleven and a half million votes into Sir Samuel Hoare’s dramatically vacated place). In replying to the deputation’s spokesman, Mr. Baldwin observed that Lord Cecil had said that it was a national declaration, and he added that he himself received it as such. His reply continued as follows:

The deputation will be aware that the foreign policy of the Government is founded upon the League of Nations. This has been many times made plain not only by my own declarations and those of my colleagues but also by the actions of this Government at Geneva, where on repeated occasions we have taken the lead in endeavouring to secure the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means in accordance with the terms of the Covenant. I am therefore interested to receive from the deputation an account of the purpose and outcome of the Peace Ballot.

You will not expect me to discuss with you in detail the questions which you set out in your questionnaire. Some of them, I will tell you frankly, I would have wished to see put in a different form. I cannot, however, but be grateful for your action in coming to see me, or fail to appreciate and admire the immense amount of voluntary work that has been done on behalf of the League.

I am glad to know that I correctly interpret your sentiments when

<sup>1</sup> Abstract in *The Times*, 17th December, 1934.

<sup>2</sup> It was to Sir Samuel Hoare’s good offices that the reception of the National Declaration Committee’s deputation by the three Ministers of the Crown was due.

I say that the object of the ballot was by no means to criticise the Government, even though some may have endeavoured to use the movement for this purpose, but rather to show the Government that we have a large volume of public opinion behind us in the efforts which we are to-day making to maintain the authority of the League of Nations.

We value this support. We are living in a period of very disturbed international relations, and I am glad of this opportunity to assure the deputation that the Government intend to persist in the policy that they have hitherto pursued, and that the League of Nations remains, as I said in a speech in Yorkshire, 'the sheet-anchor of British policy'.

In effect the Prime Minister was confessing himself to be a captive of Lord Cecil's bow and spear. He had found himself constrained to pay heed to the voice of eleven and a half million electors whose vote might turn the scale when next Mr. Baldwin's Government appealed to the country; and the truth that the Government were submitting to be led by public opinion was only thinly disguised by the Prime Minister's formula that it was the Government that were being followed by the people along a path which the Government had struck out for themselves. The success of the Peace Ballot had evidently made all the deeper an impression upon Mr. Baldwin's mind for being unexpected; and while the moral and political value of his capitulation was no doubt diminished by his partial confession that it had gone against the grain with him, he was at any rate debarred from attempting to excuse his temporary lapse, four and a half months later, from the policy to which he had committed himself in replying to this deputation on the 23rd July, by pleading that, in following the lead of the Peace Ballot, he had been simply submitting to *force majeure*. When public opinion declared itself again in December in order to bring the Government back into the path from which they were then deviating, Mr. Baldwin's plea was that he had supposed—until the public had taught him better—that his crooked side-track was still the rectilinear King's highway.

The effect of the Peace Ballot upon the policy of Mr. Baldwin's Government was, indeed, both profound and enduring. The impressiveness of the size of the figures was reinforced by the timeliness of the dates at which the final result was declared and at which Lord Cecil's deputation waited on the Prime Minister. Indeed, the promoters of the Ballot in the spring of 1934 could never have guessed how nicely timed their action would prove to be; for the interval between the 27th June and the 23rd July saw the main interest and anxiety in the arena of international affairs shift over from the European to the African part of the floor; and by the latter of these two dates it must already have been clear to Mr. Baldwin that the

Italo-Abyssinian conflict could no longer be damped down but was destined after all to flame up into a formidable conflagration. Coming at this moment, an unprecedentedly representative and emphatic expression of public opinion on the issue of the hour had a perhaps decisive influence upon the Government's policy. This influence declared itself with striking force in Sir Samuel Hoare's speech at Geneva on the 11th September;<sup>1</sup> it could be seen in the part that was played by Mr. Eden in the organization and imposition of sanctions in October;<sup>2</sup> and it was manifest again in the antecedents and results of the general election in the United Kingdom which was held on the 14th November.<sup>3</sup> Critics who censured the Government for advising a dissolution at this date pointed out that the dominant issue in the politics of the United Kingdom at this time was that of the vindication of the collective system of security in the test case of the Italo-Abyssinian conflict, and they were able to show that on this issue there was a virtually nation-wide unanimity between the supporters and the opponents of the Government. In the election campaign the League of Nations was one of the principal planks in the programme of the 'National' coalition as well as in the programmes of the Liberal and Labour Opposition.<sup>4</sup> 'The League of Nations', declared the 'National' Government's election manifesto, 'will remain as heretofore the keystone of British foreign policy';<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 185-8, below.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 223 *seqq.*, below.

<sup>3</sup> There is no evidence that, in framing their policy in regard to the Italo-Abyssinian conflict in the early autumn of 1935, either Mr. Baldwin or Sir Samuel Hoare was influenced by an anxiety to find a popular plank for an election platform. On the other hand, the manifest popularity of the Government's move (as far as it went) towards a support of the League at this juncture may well have been the determining consideration that moved the persons professionally responsible at this time for the staff-work of the party organizations of the 'National' Government to urge upon the Prime Minister—as they did urge upon him with success—that, from the tactical point of view, this was 'the psychological moment' for the 'National' Government to make the renewed appeal to the country which they were constitutionally bound to make in any case some time within the next twelve months.

<sup>4</sup> 'Il est vraiment remarquable que ce fut toujours pour le maintien de la paix par la sécurité collective, et jamais pour les intérêts de l'Empire, que les partis demandèrent l'appui des électeurs. Une telle unanimité dans l'empressement de l'opinion à soutenir le Covenant supposerait une orchestration trop savante pour n'être pas sincère.'—Vaucher and Sirieux, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

<sup>5</sup> The manifesto continued as follows: 'The prevention of war and the establishment of settled peace in the world must always be the most vital interest of the British people, and the League is the instrument which has been framed and to which we look for the attainment of these objects. We shall therefore continue to do all in our power to uphold the Covenant and to maintain and increase the efficiency of the League. In the present unhappy dispute between Italy and Abyssinia there will be no wavering in the policy we have hitherto pursued. We shall take no action in isolation, but we shall be prepared faith-

and the spectator's eye was caught by Conservative electioneering posters which were manifestly inspired by the Peace Ballot questionnaire. The effect of the Peace Ballot vote was held to account for the surprising strength of the majority by which the 'National' Government were returned to office for a second term after having been in power for four years. A large portion of the eleven and a half millions, it was believed, had felt themselves called upon to reward Mr. Baldwin with their vote at the General Election for his capitulation to the vote which they had previously recorded in the Peace Ballot. And this belief was borne out by the sequel in December. For the form in which public opinion convinced Mr. Baldwin that he had erred in accepting 'the Laval-Hoare Peace Plan' was not its expression in public meetings and leading articles and letters to the press, nor again in the strictures that were made upon the Government's change of policy by the Liberal and Labour Opposition in Parliament. What moved Mr. Baldwin was a storm of representations from his own Conservative supporters in the House of Commons, who were finding themselves inundated with letters and telegrams of protest from indignant constituents, declaring that their vote had been obtained under false pretences. Many just-elected Conservative candidates who had identified themselves, bona fide, during the election campaign, with Mr. Baldwin's pro-League election programme, and who realized that this had been one of the causes of their victory, were in fact as much incensed, as well as bewildered, at the Government's *volte-face* as were the disillusioned electors. The pressure transmitted by these 'back-bench' Conservative members was the force that brought the Government to their knees on the morrow of a victorious general election; that is to say, at a moment when in ordinary circumstances a Government might have counted on finding themselves able to snap their fingers at the electorate. This time, however, the electors were too deeply moved to submit tamely to being cheated without calling their elected representatives to account;

fully to take our part in any collective action decided upon by the League and shared in by its members. We shall endeavour to further any discussions which may offer the hope of a just and fair settlement, provided that it be within the framework of the League and acceptable to the three parties to the dispute—Italy, Abyssinia and the League itself. . . . Our attitude to the League is dictated by the conviction that collective security by collective action can alone save us from a return to the old system which resulted in the Great War. . . . A Commonwealth which holds the position in the world occupied by the United Kingdom and its partners in the British Empire must always take an influential part in League discussions. But our influence can be fully exerted only if we are recognized to be strong enough to fulfil any obligations which, jointly with others, we may undertake.'

and their protests placed a number of Conservative Members of Parliament in a quandary from which they compelled Mr. Baldwin to give them an honourable release. This situation would not have arisen if the Peace Ballot had not exercised its determining influence upon Mr. Baldwin's previous—and subsequent—line of policy. It will be seen that this private consultation of opinion in the United Kingdom was a public international event of first-class importance.

In the interval between the declaration of the results of the Peace Ballot on the 27th June, 1935, and the indirect effect of this expression of opinion in bringing about the resignation of Sir Samuel Hoare on the 18th December, the opinion which thus made itself felt *en masse* was also expressed *viritem*—in the shape of speeches at congresses and of letters published in the press—from the time, in the month of August, when it became apparent that Signor Mussolini was determined to go to war. These individual expressions of British opinion were perhaps hardly less effective, in the aggregate, than the Peace Ballot itself.

The 'general will' that emerged from these individual declarations was unmistakable.<sup>1</sup> Like the opinion expressed in the Peace Ballot, it was unhesitatingly in favour of a bona-fide application of the Covenant of the League, and of a strong British lead along this path. As the crisis came to a head, both in Africa and at Geneva, the current of this feeling in Great Britain swelled into a flood which swept away both the 'Die-Hard' and the 'Pacifist' opposition. The individuals whose utterances gave the tide of opinion its steady direction and its irresistible momentum were as various in their characters, stations, qualities and experience as they were severally authoritative and collectively representative of the country; but one outstanding feature in this harmony of many voices was the prominence of the part that was played by the leaders of the Churches.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See the illuminating analysis in Vaucher and Siriex, *op. cit.*, pp. 53–90.

<sup>2</sup> This intervention of the Churches in politics was a new feature in the public life of the United Kingdom. The first occasion on which this religious voice had been heard as a dominant note had been the domestic crisis produced by the General Strike of 1926. Historically the Anglican Established Church had been, for some four centuries past, a classic example of a church which was in bondage to a state, while for the first three of these four centuries the free Protestant Churches, as well as the Catholic Church, had had to pay for their freedom from state control by being excluded to a large extent from participation in the public life of the country. In 1935 it looked as though the United Kingdom were sloughing off the vestiges of its precocious sixteenth-century totalitarianism at a moment when some countries farther to the east were being committed to a twentieth-century totalitarianism which was more extreme than the worst excesses of Tudors or Stuarts. In this context it might be read as a good omen for the future relations of church and state in



On the 25th July, 1935, two documents were published in the English press. One of them was a joint message to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations from the Archbishop of Canterbury, who was the Primate of All England, and from the Archbishop of Uppsala, who was the Primate of Sweden, appealing to the Council 'to prevent the outbreak of a war between two members of the League which would shock the conscience of the World'. The other document published on the same date was a statement from the National Council of Labour (a body which embraced the National Executive of the Labour Party, the Parliamentary Labour Party and the General Council of the Trades Union Congress) calling upon the Government of the United Kingdom to 'make known its ultimate intentions with regard to the Italo-Abyssinian dispute'. On the 30th July there appeared in *The Times* a letter from Lord Lugard, a member of the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations, who was one of the oldest, as well as the most distinguished and creative and enlightened, among the British pioneers of European penetration into Tropical Africa. 'If the war takes place', Lord Lugard declared, 'and is condoned by the principal nations of the League, the League itself can hardly survive as an effective agency for peace'. And he added: 'England has her opportunity at Geneva—God grant she may not lose it "through craven fear of being great"'. The issue was raised again by the Archbishop of Canterbury in a monthly letter, for the month of August 1935, in *The Canterbury Diocesan Gazette* which was quoted in the daily press on the 2nd. On the 7th August *The Times* published a letter from Lord Cecil—a statesman-churchman who was one of the fathers of the League of Nations—asking whether the British Government had made it quite clear to other Governments that they were prepared to take collective action in discharge of British obligations under Articles 10 and 16 of the Covenant; and a leading article in the same newspaper on the same date, in which Lord Cecil's question was deprecated as 'an untimely proposal', did not check the flow of opinion in Lord Cecil's sense. On the 8th August *The Manchester Guardian* published a letter from Lord Howard of Penrith proposing that the leading Powers should make a joint declaration of intention to refuse loans and credits to a peace-breaker.

On the 19th August another note was introduced in a letter in

Great Britain that the year 1935 was the four-hundredth anniversary of the martyrdom of Sir Thomas More: an English statesman-saint who, at the cost of his life, had refused to obey the laws of Man when these came into conflict with the law of God.

*The Times* from Mr. George Lansbury, a Christian Pacifist who had won the respect and affection of many of his countrymen who were his political opponents. Mr. Lansbury called for a 'Truce of God' pending the convocation of an international conference to discuss an equitable redistribution of access to markets and sources of supply. On the 20th this letter was supported by the publication of one in the same sense from Canon H. R. L. Sheppard. The outstanding letter, however, which appeared in *The Times* on the 20th came from the incisive pen of the Archbishop of York. This letter clarified the issue for the British public by submitting the following considerations:

(1) We are bound by the Covenant of the League. It is reassuring to be told that adherence to the League of Nations is 'the keystone of British policy'. But it is more than this: it is a clear moral obligation. To fail now in loyalty to the League because that loyalty might have grave consequences would be sheer wickedness involving indefinable disgrace. (2) The obligation of states as members of the League is 'joint', not 'several'. We must make perfectly clear our adherence to the League and our purpose to make operative the terms of the Covenant. But we retain our own freedom if the other Powers refuse to co-operate. (3) We have a responsibility for leadership, partly because we enjoy a measure of detachment, and partly because of our special position in relation to the Suez Canal.

A concrete proposal which proved to be of profound practical importance was put forward—in a letter published in *The Times* on the 22nd August—by Sir Thomas Holland. This distinguished man of science had long been studying the possibilities of a 'mineral sanction', and he now drew attention to its great potential effectiveness as a means of restraining Italy. The 23rd saw the publication of a striking letter from the Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, Mgr. Hinsley, expressing sympathy with a suggestion in Mr. Lansbury's letter that the initiative in securing the proclamation of a 'Truce of God' should be taken by the Pope. Another letter in *The Times* of the same date, from Sir Charles Hobhouse, followed up the letter from the Archbishop of York. 'Is Great Britain to lead in saying "Yes" or in saying "No"' to the execution of Article 16 of the Covenant by the states members of the League? 'Her risk in saying "Yes" is obvious and immediate. . . . The risk in saying "No" may be less immediate, but is ultimately fatal.'

On the 25th August Canon F. R. Barry, preaching in Westminster Abbey, declared that to stand by the League was a moral obligation, and that, while taking that stand might have grave consequences, 'the braver the lead taken by Great Britain, the harder for others

to refuse to follow it'. He added that loyalty to the League 'must mean for us some will to sacrifice, not only of political sovereignty but it may be also of possessions'. In a letter published in *The Times* on the 26th Sir Norman Angell arraigned the British Government for being ready to take all risks, single-handed, for the defence of the smallest British possession, while being in two minds about the defence of the Covenant. In a letter published in the same paper on the 27th August the precise attitude which Sir Norman Angell was attacking was exhibited in a letter from Lord Hardinge of Penshurst—a former Viceroy of India and Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs—who submitted that 'in the present crisis there is no danger to the security of even a British possession', and asked whether he and his fellow countrymen were to consider themselves 'morally bound by the Covenant. . . to take steps to punish a recalcitrant member by measures which' might 'be described as moral and material suicide'. The 28th August brought a reply to Lord Hardinge from Lord Cecil: 'If we leave Abyssinia in the lurch now, we shall be guilty of an unpardonable breach of faith, for which we shall unquestionably suffer in the near future.'<sup>1</sup>

On the same day *The Times* published a reply from the Archbishop of Canterbury to Mr. Lansbury (who had appealed, in his letter of the 19th, to the two Archbishops of the Church of England to call upon the Pope to take the initiative in securing the 'Truce of God' for which he was pleading). 'In a world where manifestly at present the Christian law of love is not established, and where mere appeal and exhortation cannot of themselves establish it, organized action may at least restrain pride and greed from committing wrong and inflicting upon men the horrors of war.' On the same day the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Moderator of the Federation of Evangelical Free Churches issued a joint request for prayer over the meeting of the League Council which was to be held on the 4th September. On the same day, again, *The Times* published a letter from Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede—the leader of the Labour Party in the House of Lords and a former Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs—in which he advocated as a Pacifist the policy of defaulting on the Covenant which had been advocated, on quite different grounds, by Lord Hardinge. 'Nothing', he wrote, 'would be more clumsy and ill advised than for Great Britain precipitately . . . to take the lead in proposing eventual sanctions.'

In *The Times* of the 29th August African voices were brought

<sup>1</sup> 'Lord Hardinge of Penshurst . . . apparaît très isolé'.—Vaucher and Sirieux, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

into the debate. A letter from Sir Abe Bailey drew attention to General Smuts's warning that all the eyes of the African peoples were fixed on the menace to Abyssinia; and the writer went on to take a view of even more than Pan-African breadth. 'A very vital interest is concerned—the British interest in the preservation of peace. . . . If the British Commonwealth, with or without the support of the League, proves powerless to preserve Abyssinia from conquest, then the British Commonwealth, as well as the League, will have ceased to exist except in name.' A letter from Lord Olivier in the same issue informed the writer's countrymen that, if the British Government broke the word that they had given in subscribing to the Covenant, 'England' would 'be indelibly disgraced, not only among her own people, but . . . in the judgment of the whole African World' The same point was put in the form of a question—'Surely we are not going to fall in with the French policy of buying off Mussolini with vast concessions at the cost of Abyssinia?'—by Miss Margery Perham, an Oxford student of Africa, in a letter published on the 30th August.

On the same day *The Times* published a letter from the Bishop of Durham in which he supported Sir Charles Hobhouse and contended with Mr. Lansbury on the issue of Pacifism. 'Justice is a higher concern than Peace; for while Justice can never be rightly abandoned, Peace can never be unreservedly pursued.' On the other hand, *The Manchester Guardian* of the same date published a letter from another adherent of the Church of England, Sir Henry Page Croft, the Conservative Member of Parliament for Bournemouth, in which he pressed Lord Hardinge's arguments upon the attention of the Bournemouth Branch of the League of Nations Union. Sir Henry Page Croft received his answer in Sir Charles Hobhouse's reply to Lord Hardinge—'national safety has never been purchased by national cowardice'—in a letter which was published in *The Times* of the 31st.

In an address broadcast on the 1st September the Archbishop of York submitted that if an effective execution of the Covenant 'involved the use of armed forces', he and his fellow countrymen 'ought to be prepared to use them', and that 'there was nothing un-Christian in that'. But the Archbishop also took up and drove home a point that had been made by Canon F. R. Barry.

Before there was any thought of a League of Nations we had ourselves occupied a great part of the Earth and of the supply of raw materials. By the very treaty which set up the League we entered upon control of a great deal more—the mandated territory. If we now say to those who have need of expansion: 'In the name of Love and Brotherhood—

hands off!" we shall be convicted of gross hypocrisy. If we really believe in the community of nations we must be ready, and obviously ready, to start the work of arranging for the nations which lack outlet the means of satisfying their need. It will be far the greatest and most difficult problem ever attempted by human statesmanship. The need for sacrifice of all acquisitiveness, the rights of inhabitants in the lands affected, and a host of other factors will render that problem insoluble except to those who approach it in real goodwill. Yet we must be ready to try. The League must stand for equity as well as law.

In a letter published in *The Times* on the 4th September Dr. S. M. Berry gave voice to the feeling of the Free Churches in terms which covered both the two points of Dr. Temple's address.

Free Churchmen see far more danger in the abandonment of the collective system than in firm adhesion to it . . . Free Churchmen are at one with the leaders of the Church of England in urging upon the Government to give a lead to the nations of the World by expressing their readiness to look at the whole question of undeveloped territories in a larger way.

On the 5th September *The Times* published a letter, protesting against the imposition of sanctions, from representatives of the Fellowship of Reconciliation and of the Christian Pacifist Groups. The same day saw the publication of a resolution, in a very different sense, which had been drafted by the National Council of Labour for submission to the Trades Union Congress at its meeting at Margate. This resolution—calling for the use of 'all the necessary measures provided by the Covenant to resist Italy's unjust and rapacious attack'—was moved, on the 5th, by Sir Walter Citrine and was carried, on a card vote, by 2,962,000 votes against 177,000. A personal dissent from this expression of Labour opinion was avowed by Mr. Lansbury in a statement published on the 9th, and also, by implication, in a speech delivered on that day at Dumfries. In London, on the 13th, at a meeting organized by the Fellowship of Reconciliation and by the Council of Christian Pacifist Groups, Mr. Lansbury declared his faith in a policy of disarmament accompanied by a renunciation of the spoils of imperialism. The same position was adopted—though this with a harsher gesture—by Sir Stafford Cripps, speaking at Bletchley on the 15th. On the other hand, in London on the 12th, Mr. Herbert Morrison had declared that Sir Samuel Hoare's speech of the 11th September at Geneva commanded the overwhelming support of British public opinion.

In a letter published in *The Times* of the 16th September a former British Ambassador, Sir Francis Lindley, quoted Gladstone to his purpose of arguing that, in the honouring of treaty obligations,

circumstances alter cases, while, in a letter printed in the same column, Lord Selborne put the question: 'If the solemnly pledged word of a great Christian nation is worth nothing at all, how will Europeans differ in manners and inventions from savages?' In a speech delivered in Yorkshire on the 18th Lord Lothian—following Canon Barry's and Dr. Temple's lead—urged the need for peaceful change as well as for resistance to aggression. On the other hand, in a letter published in *The Times* on the 21st, Sir Charles Mallet argued—to the same purpose as Lord Ponsonby—the thesis 'that reliance upon sanctions is, in the days we live in, incompatible with the pursuit of peace': a proposition which had led the Bishop of Durham to the conclusion that Peace must give way, in the last resort, to Justice. On the 24th *The Times* published a letter, contesting Sir Charles Mallet's conclusions, from Mr. Harold Cox.

Meanwhile, on the 19th September, it became known that Lord Ponsonby had resigned the leadership of the Labour Party in the House of Lords,<sup>1</sup> that Sir Stafford Cripps had resigned from the Labour Party Executive,<sup>2</sup> and that an offer of resignation had been tendered to the party by Mr. Lansbury himself—news which evoked from *The Times* a leading article pointing out that these were 'manifestations of dissent from the official policy of the Labour Movement which' did 'not impair the essential unity of national opinion on the Abyssinian question'.

On the 24th September there appeared in *The Times* a letter from Sir Arnold Wilson, who—fresh from a personal interview with Signor Mussolini—committed himself to the proposition that 'the voting on the Peace Ballot served to confirm' the view 'that popular opinion in' Great Britain was 'opposed to economic sanctions'. The writer added that all that he had heard and seen in Rome and elsewhere convinced him that, 'having done our utmost to fulfil our obligations, we should now stand aside'. In a masterly letter, which was published in the same paper on the same day, Sir Norman Angell—summing up the course of the controversy up to date—put his finger on the strange identity of view between 'Die-Hards' and 'Pacifists', and sought to refute both schools by exposing fallacies in their reasoning. A striking contribution to the debate—and this on a line that might not have been expected—was also made by Mr. Winston Churchill in a speech of the 26th September.

<sup>1</sup> Text of Lord Ponsonby's letter of resignation, dated the 17th September, 1935, to Mr. Lansbury, in *The Times*, 19th September, 1935.

<sup>2</sup> Text of his letter to the secretary of the party in *The Manchester Guardian*, 20th September, 1935.

The whole country, indeed the whole Empire, is, I believe, ready to support His Majesty's Government in making its contribution to the authority of the League of Nations in accordance with the obligations into which we have entered. Our duty and our vital interest in peace compel us to take our share and do our part in the workings of that great international instrument which seeks to establish the reign of law among nations and ward off the measureless perils of another world struggle. If the League of Nations is now found capable of preventing a colonial war in Africa without broadening it out into a general European war, that will be an immeasurable gain to the safety of all countries. I trust that France will realize how vital to her own security in the future it is for the League of Nations to emerge successful from this decisive test.

On the same day another strong speech in favour of honouring British obligations under the Covenant was made by a former British Ambassador to Argentina, Sir Malcolm Robertson.

The 30th September saw the opening at Brighton of a session of the Labour Party Conference at which the international issue overshadowed all others. The opening address of the chairman, Mr. W. A. Robinson, contained an emphatic demand for the application of economic sanctions, and after a three days' debate the Conference adopted the resolution which had already been passed by the Trades Union Congress. Once again the majority was overwhelming—2,168,000 votes (on a card vote) being cast in favour of the resolution as against only 102,000 against it. After this, Mr. Lansbury's offer of resignation from the leadership of the Labour Party could no longer be refused, and it was regretfully accepted by his colleagues on the 8th October.

This was how public opinion in Great Britain had declared itself by the 3rd October, 1935—the date on which the beginning of the Italian invasion of Abyssinia was officially announced by General de Bono—and the strength of this British feeling in favour of the fulfilment of the Covenant showed itself again and again under the test of subsequent international events: for example, upon the finding by the Council of the League on the 7th October, and by the Assembly on the 9th, that Italy had rendered herself liable to the pains and penalties of Article 16; and upon the failure of nerve in official circles in London and Paris which betrayed itself in December in 'the Laval-Hoare Peace Plan'.

In a speech delivered on the 3rd October itself Sir Herbert Samuel, the leader of the Liberal Party, declared that Italy's attack on Abyssinia was 'everybody's business' and that 'the League, and Britain as a member of the League, must see this matter through'. On the 6th the Archbishop of Canterbury spoke of the war at the

ceremony of laying the foundation stone of a new church at West Wickham which was to bear the name of Saint Francis of Assisi; and he expressed the hope that

the nations of the World represented in the League of Nations will not suffer so cynical a defiance of the pledges and covenants which Italy has made with them to pass unnoticed, and without some effort to restrain and to vindicate the common law of reason and justice which Italy pledged itself to acknowledge and obey.

On the 9th October the Congregational Union of England and Wales, at an autumnal session in Brighton, passed a resolution in support of the British Government's policy; and on the 10th the press published the text of a telegram which had been sent to Mr. Eden at Geneva by the Archbishop of York and a number of Bishops, Deans and other representatives of the clergy of the Church of England, assuring the British Government's representative that he had their support 'in taking whatever action' might 'be necessary to uphold the Covenant of the League and to put an immediate stop to war'. On the same day at Bournemouth, at a session of the Church Congress, the arguments in favour of collective international action, and also both the 'Pacifist' and the 'Die-Hard' arguments against it, were put by a succession of eminent speakers—Mr. Lansbury, Sir Henry Page Croft, Canon Sheppard, and Lord Cecil—who combined these diverse political views with their common Anglican Christianity. On the 14th October, at Glasgow, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Neville Chamberlain, in a speech looking towards the general election in the United Kingdom which was to be held on the 14th November, defended the British Government's policy against both the pacifism of Mr. Lansbury and the isolationism of Mr. Amery.<sup>1</sup> On the 22nd, in the Chapter House of Canterbury Cathedral, at the opening of the autumn Diocesan Conference, the Archbishop of Canterbury once again declared himself, with the same decidedness as before, in favour of upholding the Covenant by the application of economic sanctions; and on this occasion he mentioned that he had 'ventured to make an approach to his Holiness the Pope', but had learnt that he was 'unwilling at present to say more than he' had 'already publicly said'.<sup>2</sup> On the 23rd October the press pub-

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Amery, in a speech made to his constituents at Sparkbrook, Birmingham, on the 8th October, had committed himself to the following declaration: 'I am not prepared to send a single Birmingham lad to his death for the sake of Abyssinia.' This challenge of Mr. Amery's was taken up, not only by Mr. Neville Chamberlain at Glasgow on the 14th October, but also by Mr. Vyvyan Adams in the House of Commons at Westminster on the 22nd.

<sup>2</sup> 'We must all generously recognize', Dr. Lang added, 'the peculiar difficulty in which he is placed.'



lished a statement from the Archbishop setting forth the views of a private and informal conference, representing various Christian communions in Great Britain, which had met under his chairmanship at Lambeth Palace on the 11th. The statement was an affirmation of belief in the principles of collective security and peaceful change; in the reduction of armaments, and, above all, in loyalty to the Kingdom of God. The Pacifist position was condemned theologically—as partaking of the Marcionite, Manichæan and Pelagian heresies—by the Archbishop of York in a contribution to *The York Diocesan Leaflet* which was reprinted on the 29th October in *The Times*. On the 30th October, in the Albert Hall, the maintenance of collective action against Italy was advocated by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Cecil, Sir Austen Chamberlain, Lady Violet Bonham Carter and Mr. Herbert Morrison at a public meeting, organized by the League of Nations Union, at which the Archbishop took the chair. As Dr. Lang pointed out on this occasion, the presence of representatives of all three parties on one platform, just before a general election, was an event which was as significant as it was unprecedented.

The result of the polling, which took place on the 14th November, bore fresh testimony—as has been mentioned, by anticipation, above<sup>1</sup>—to the strength of the public opinion in the United Kingdom that was supporting the application of the Covenant in the Italo-Abyssinian conflict; for, on the one hand, Mr. Baldwin was criticized for holding an election at all when the issue before the country was one on which each of the three parties held an identical view; and, on the other hand, the substantial majority by which the ‘National’ coalition’s supporters were returned—a majority which was unusually large<sup>2</sup> for a party which had already been in office for four years—was ascribed by experienced observers to the effect of ‘the Peace Ballot vote’. This vote, it was believed, had been largely cast in favour of the ‘National’ coalition in recognition of the Government’s action up to date in fulfilment of its obligations under the Covenant in the Italo-Abyssinian crisis; and this explanation of the election results was borne out by certain facts which have been touched upon already. In the election campaign one of the chief planks in the ‘National’ platform was an asseveration that the Government had proved by

<sup>1</sup> See p. 54, above.

<sup>2</sup> In the previous Parliament—which had been elected in the extraordinary circumstances of the year 1931—the ‘National’ Government had commanded 513 votes out of 615. In the new Parliament which was elected on the 14th November, 1935, the same Government still commanded 431 votes out of 615.

their previous acts, and would continue to prove if they were returned to office, that the Covenant of the League was the basis of their foreign policy. And on the morrow of the election, no more than fourteen days after Mr. Baldwin and his colleagues in the Cabinet had met the new Parliament, the importance of the rôle which 'the Peace Ballot vote' had actually played, in response to the Government's election appeal, was demonstrated retrospectively, upon the publication of 'the Laval-Hoare Peace Plan', by the storm of public indignation at what was widely felt to be a cynical and shameful repudiation of the Government's election pledges.

During the interval between the 14th November, 1935, when the electorate of the United Kingdom went to the polls, and the 10th December, when the public became aware of the tenor of 'the Laval-Hoare Peace Plan', the British voices commending the Government for their support of the League were already beginning to be mingled with voices expressing some doubt of the Government's fidelity to the policy to which they had committed themselves—and to the mandate which they had just received for carrying this policy through—now that Mr. Baldwin was assured of remaining in office for another four or five years.

On the one hand, the Bishop of Durham, addressing the Durham Diocesan Conference on the 16th November, 1935, praised the Government for having stood out 'as the consistent, steadfast and unselfish champion of treaty rights and Covenant obligations'. And the Archbishop of York, on landing at New York on the 6th December, showed the earnestness of his belief in collective security by telling the reporters that it might 'be necessary to have another great and horrible war to establish the efficacy of the League of Nations'. On the other hand, an undertone of misgiving made itself audible in a letter from Mr. Wickham Steed which was published in *The Times* on the 22nd November; and, in a speech delivered in the House of Commons at Westminster on the 6th December by the Foreign Secretary, the emphasis was placed by Sir Samuel Hoare upon the need for caution in the application of sanctions against Italy rather than upon the need for firmness and vigour in making these sanctions effective for their purpose of frustrating the Italian act of aggression.

The history of 'the Laval-Hoare Peace Plan', to which this speech was an overture, is recorded in this volume in another context;<sup>1</sup> and in this place it is only relevant in so far as it illuminates the contemporary state of British opinion and feeling on the Italo-Abyssinian

<sup>1</sup> See section (x), below.

issue. In this chapter of the story the march of events was too rapid for a repetition of what had happened in the summer and autumn, when a long series of public speeches and letters to the press had had time to produce a cumulative effect. Between the 10th and the 19th December, 1935, it is not improbable that as many letters on the Italo-Abyssinian issue were written in Great Britain as in all the earlier months of the calendar year taken together; but the majority of these letters on the 'Peace Plan' were not made public because they were not addressed to the editors of newspapers. They arrived, in sheaves, at the doorsteps of the recently elected supporters of Mr. Baldwin's Government in the House of Commons; and these protests from outraged constituents, declaring that their votes had been obtained on false pretences, were taken deeply to heart by Conservative Members of Parliament who had just won their seats on the 'National' programme of basing British foreign policy on the Covenant of the League of Nations; for, as candidates for election, they had adopted the Government's platform in the belief that the Government themselves intended to abide by it; they had accepted this platform on their own account; and they now felt that, if the Government were to abandon the policy on which they had been elected as soon as the election was over, then they themselves might never be able to face the electorate again. In this state of mind the parliamentary supporters of Mr. Baldwin transmitted to the Prime Minister with almost undiminished force the protests with which they themselves were being bombarded by the public; and through this channel the public opinion of the British nation succeeded, in the space of ten days, in compelling a Prime Minister who had just been returned to power by a large majority to throw over his Foreign Secretary and to swerve back into the path of loyalty (within limits) to the Covenant from which he had made this abrupt but brief deviation.

Meanwhile the volume of the flood of unpublished letters which was sweeping Mr. Baldwin off his feet might be gauged from the simultaneous stream of public speeches and leading articles and letters to the press. The otherwise almost unanimous condemnation of the 'Peace Plan' in the leading articles was only rendered more conspicuous by the sharp dissent of the papers owned by Lord Beaverbrook and Lord Rothermere; and in the series of public speeches and letters many champions of the collective system who had spoken out in August and September now returned to the charge.

The series of letters was opened in *The Times* of the 12th December

by Sir Abe Bailey in a letter which recalled what the League had achieved up to the moment of Sir Samuel Hoare's concurrence in Monsieur Laval's proposals, and which went on to declare that

These were great results, calling, not for irresolution and surrender and foreboding, but for the courage which carried a well-started enterprise to the goal of achievement. Now they have been jeopardized, perhaps irretrievably wrecked. The small nations—and the Dominions, relatively speaking, are small nations—are once again uneasy, and some of them are in despair. Other aggressors will take heart and go on sharpening their swords, and my own disillusioned country of South Africa sees in front of it not only the violation of a Covenant, but the beginning of a threat to its own existence as an independent country within the British Empire. But there is one ray of hope. The old British spirit has arisen, and the people of England will take the matter in hand.

On the 12th, again, Sir Samuel Hoare's action was censured as 'a grave error' by the former leader of the Liberal Party, Sir Herbert Samuel, in a speech delivered at a dinner of the Eighty Club; and on the 13th the Government's *volte-face* was described as 'a cynical manoeuvre' by the leader of the Labour Party, Mr. Attlee, speaking in the Bassetlaw Division, while Mr. Alwyn Parker, in one among several letters of censure on the Government which appeared in *The Times* of the 14th, declared that 'it all sounds like Lewis Carroll and Alice in Wonderland'. The voice of the Dominions, which had been raised on the 12th by a South African financier, was heard again on the 16th from the mouth of an Australian scholar. In a letter published in *The Times* of that date Professor W. K. Hancock submitted that 'the enlightened self-interest of the British Commonwealth demands a loyalty to the League which may be prudent, but which must be unambiguous'. The 18th saw the publication of a condemnatory declaration from the National Council of Labour, and of a hardly less severe letter from a Conservative Member of Parliament, Mr. Harold Macmillan, who, in writing to *The Times*, protested against the endorsement of 'the cynical and shameful proposals of the Hoare-Laval Plan' by His Majesty's Government. On the 19th *The Times* published a letter from Colonel Cuthbert Headlam, submitting that 'if, on this occasion, the British Government has made a grave mistake, it owes it to the World, it owes it to the British nation, and it owes it to the Conservative Party, frankly and freely to admit this error'. In a letter published in the same column on the same date Miss Perham forecast, on the basis of previous evidence, the effect which the 'Peace Plan' was likely to have upon native African public opinion. These last blows were almost superfluous; for the *coup de grâce* had already been administered in a leading article

entitled 'A Corridor for Camels' which had appeared in *The Times* of the 16th December.

In the aftermath of the debate of the 19th December, 1935, in the House of Commons, two voices made themselves heard once again. In an impressive passage in his speech on that evening Sir Samuel Hoare had made one telling point:

I have been terrified with the thought—I speak very frankly to the House—that we might lead Abyssinia on to think that the League could do more than it can do—(cheers), that in the end we should find a terrible moment of disillusionment in which it may be that Abyssinia would be destroyed altogether as an independent state. I have been terrified at that position, and I could not help thinking of the past, in which more than once in our history we have given, and rightly given, all our sympathies to some threatened or down-trodden race, but because we have been unable to implement and give effect to those sympathies all that we had done was to encourage them, with the result that in the end their fate was worse than it would have been without our sympathy.

This point was taken up in a letter from a retired British diplomatist, Sir Francis Lindley, which was published in *The Times* of the 20th December:

The Paris proposals are not in accord either with League principles or with abstract justice. Without war, no settlement can be obtained which is either the one or the other, and the practical question is whether the proposals offered Abyssinia the chance of a better settlement than she would have obtained if they were rejected. Let enthusiasts beware of continuing to treat the Abyssinians as their fellows treated the Danes, the Armenians, the Greeks, and many more in the past. Humanitarian sentiments are laudable and gratifying to self-esteem, but they are not appreciated abroad when they merely encourage others in a course of action which leads them to destruction.

On the 23rd *The Times* published an answer to Sir Francis Lindley from another retired British diplomatist, Sir Malcolm Robertson; and the prevailing opinion of 'the vast majority of the nation', as it stood at the end of the year, was summed up—in a letter published in *The Times* on the 28th—by Lord Allen of Hurtwood:

They believe that the risks of continuing to honour and develop the collective system are far less than those which would follow surrender to the aggressor. To pay off the law-breaker would not only encourage other aggressors but would leave every nation without any alternative, except a race in modern armaments in a desperate and unsuccessful search for safety.

The calendar year ended on the open question whether the British people would have the perseverance and the courage to pursue to the end the policy on which they had so deliberately and decidedly

embarked.<sup>1</sup> The secret of success in this high and perilous endeavour was proclaimed in an appeal which was issued by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York to be read from the pulpit on the 5th January, 1936, the first Sunday of the New Year:

No thoughtful men can view the present situation without grave anxiety. It is acknowledged that the supreme need of the World is a settled peace. Yet the minds of men everywhere are restless, confused, fearful of the future.

It has been made plain that international treaties, pacts, and covenants are not of themselves enough to ensure the peace which the World needs. It is plain that past experience is not enough. We might have thought that the experience of the Great War had proved once for all the horror and foolishness of war. But a new generation has grown up forgetful of that awful lesson. It is plain that the natural instincts of men are not enough. For these instincts still cling to old and deep-rooted suspicions and jealousies. They are too easily stirred by the excitements of a self-regarding patriotism. It is plain also that what we call civilization is not enough. For the very science on which it relies is forging weapons of war which, if they be let loose, may accomplish its own destruction.

Must it not then be equally plain that, if these natural influences are not enough, it is only a supernatural power which can ensure peace—in a word, the incoming of the Kingdom of God?

#### (f) THE CONFLICT BETWEEN BRITISH AND FRENCH OPINION

The foregoing estimates of the British and French reactions to the Italo-Abyssinian conflict perhaps confirm the view<sup>2</sup> that, in this chapter of international history, Great Britain and France exchanged—at any rate temporarily and superficially—their characteristic post-war rôles. This dual *volte-face* caused an equal amazement—and annoyance—on both sides; and it was no doubt inevitable that these feelings, in their turn, should produce an acute state of misunderstanding and tension between the two countries. It was perhaps rather a matter for wonder and congratulation that the Anglo-French entente, in any shape or form, should have outlasted the Armistice of 1918 by seventeen years, and that, even now, it should prove capable of standing so severe an additional strain; for this continued avoidance of an open Anglo-French rupture ran counter to one of the fundamental 'laws' that had usually governed the course of international relations.

This 'law' was to the effect that, after a general war which had

<sup>1</sup> The reaction in the United Kingdom during the spring and summer of 1936 to the collapse of Abyssinian resistance is dealt with in section (xiii), below.

<sup>2</sup> For an anticipatory statement of this view, see pp. 31-2, above.

resulted in a decisive victory for one party, the principal victors should redistribute themselves into opposite scales of the balance of power until they had brought this balance back into equilibrium by a reversal of alliances. After the last general war in the Western World before that of 1914-18, the definitive defeat, in 1815, of the French attempt at domination had been followed by a reconciliation between France and her secular adversary Great Britain, who, in the last round of the contest, had been the heart and soul of the anti-Napoleonic coalition. On this showing, the defeat of Germany by the Allied and Associated Powers in 1918 ought to have been followed by an Anglo-German *rapprochement*; and in fact the relations between Great Britain and Germany grew steadily more cordial, as Anglo-French cordiality waned, from the date of the Franco-Belgian invasion of the Ruhr on the 11th January, 1923, down to Herr Hitler's advent to power in the Reich on the 30th January, 1933. Nor did the sudden and violent revulsion of British feeling towards Germany which promptly followed the Hitlerian revolution from a parliamentary democratic to a Fascist dictatorial régime<sup>1</sup> reverse, or even arrest, the post-war process of British alienation from France; for British public opinion attributed to the negativeness and implacability of French foreign policy since the Armistice a large share of the responsibility for the eruption of National Socialism in Germany; and the greater the indignation and alarm that were aroused in British hearts by the creed and practice of Herr Hitler and his followers, the sharper became the British resentment against France for the part which France was judged by British observers to have played in bringing the plague of a demented Germany upon the head of an already distracted Europe. Accordingly, in 1935, when Great Britain and France fell out over an international crisis which had no direct relation to the German problem, the unabated British hatred and fear of 'Hitlerism' did not deter British public opinion from reacting as bitterly against the French complacency towards Italy as it had reacted against the French implacability towards Germany in 1922-3; and this time, once again, the British franco-phobia found a tangible focus in the person of a French statesman. In 1935 the opportunism of Monsieur Laval was as odious in British eyes as the rigidity of Monsieur Poincaré had been thirteen years before.

Conversely, the French, for their part, resented the British efforts to draw them into taking action against Italy in 1935 as bitterly as, in 1922, they had resented the British efforts to deter them from

<sup>1</sup> For this revulsion, see the *Survey for 1933*, pp. 163-71.

taking action against Germany. In fact, in 1935 Franco-British relations were under a severer strain than they had been at any time since the acceptance of the Dawes Plan on the 25th-28th April, 1924,<sup>1</sup> but with this fundamental difference in the European situation, that the Germany who had still been prostrate in 1924 was now in the act of rising, shakily but menacingly, to her feet.

It may be useful to analyse in greater detail the Anglo-French misunderstanding of 1935 and the respective feelings and considerations that underlay it on either side.

The French, on their side, were exasperated at what appeared to them to be a *chef d'œuvre* of the characteristic perversity of English behaviour. As the French saw it, the English had waited to commit themselves to the League of Nations until they had driven the French into despairing of it. If only the English had displayed from 1920 onwards that fervour of devotion to the Covenant which they suddenly began to express in 1935, then the French might not have been pushed into reinsuring themselves—against the ostentatious lukewarmness of the British allegiance to the principle of collective security on the European Continent—by weaving their network of treaties of mutual guarantee with Belgium, Poland and the states members of the Little Entente. Even if the British had proclaimed their conversion no earlier than the beginning of 1933, upon Herr Hitler's advent to power in Germany, the French might still have turned towards the United Kingdom for the additional support of which they felt the need in face of a Germany who was once more becoming militant. But, instead of that, the British had made no sign until the French had reinforced their existing Continental alliances by negotiating the Franco-Italian Pact of the 7th January and the Franco-Russian Treaty of the 2nd May, 1935. Then, and only then, had the British been moved to declare that their foreign policy was solidly based upon the Covenant after all; and, even then, they had chosen to avow this faith in, and devotion to, the League in circumstances which were calculated to cause an immediate and particular embarrassment to France that would more than offset the ultimate general advantage that she might expect to derive from this tardy British adherence to the cause of collective security. In looking about for a *corpus vile* upon which to demonstrate their new-found enthusiasm for the application of sanctions in pursuance of Article 16 of the Covenant, the British had singled out France's latest, most valuable, and most laboriously and precariously acquired Continental European ally, and had vociferously called upon Monsieur Laval to overthrow his own recent

<sup>1</sup> See the *Survey for 1924*, Part II A, sections (iv)-(vi) and pp. 358-9.



handiwork by taking a leading part, side by side with Great Britain herself, in applying coercion to Signor Mussolini on account of an African colonial adventure which—in the possibly rather myopic French outlook—appeared to involve no appreciable threat to the post-war political *status quo* in Europe.

To this French indictment it was in vain for the British to reply that Italy had, after all, committed a grossly flagrant breach of the Covenant—an instrument which France and Great Britain alike were pledged to uphold—by perpetrating an act of unprovoked aggression against a fellow state member of the League. The French retort (*mirabile dictu*) was to arraign the British for taking a pedantically legalistic line which did not correspond to the realities. The handling of the Italo-Abyssinian conflict ought not to be governed (so the French protested) by the sheer formality of Abyssinia's membership of the League of Nations. The fact that she had been admitted to membership by an error of judgement ought not to weigh against the far more material fact that she was an 'unworthy' (*indigne*) member: a backward and barbarous Oriental state. And the tradition of Western diplomacy was to subordinate African and Asiatic rights to European exigencies. Had not the Triple Entente been cemented, during the decade ending in 1914, by the sacrifice of Morocco and Egypt and Persia? And had not the Central Powers sought, on the eve of the General War of 1914–18, to retain the allegiance of Italy by conniving at her unprovoked spoliation of their own ally Turkey? What was Abyssinia that her theoretical right to a barbaric independence should be allowed to prise asunder a recently achieved Franco-Italian *rapprochement* which, in French eyes, had already come to be regarded as the keystone in the none too solid arch of the balance of power in Europe?

In French eyes the pedantry and perversity of the British demand that France should risk a breach with Italy on Abyssinia's account was so preposterous that French minds found it difficult to believe that the professed ground of British policy could be the true motive; and the French found a more convincing explanation in the Italian thesis that the suddenly manifested British enthusiasm for the League in this fantastic application of the Covenant really masked a selfish concern for local British imperial interests. This French view of British policy was formulated as follows by two sharp-sighted French observers writing in 1936:

How many Frenchmen are there who persist in seeing nothing more than a manifestation of imperialism in the crisis through which Great Britain has just passed—overlooking the fact that the campaign to

carry public opinion [in support of the League] was all along led by the adversaries of imperialism and was opposed by its exponents? . . . How many Frenchmen have convinced themselves that the defence of the British Empire, of the route to India and of the sources of the Nile is the consideration for which the English have been bestirring themselves, and that, in the whole debate, the principles invoked are mere cloaks for imperial interests? They are impressed with the spectacle of England's perpetual success in making her principles coincide with her interests; and the perspicacity with which they flatter themselves that they have seen through the British motives dispenses them, as they imagine, from any necessity to inquire further.

These Frenchmen would consider it naive to allow their feelings to be engaged by the abrupt conversion of a nation which finds itself overcome by so lively an attachment to the League of Nations at a moment when the League can be of service to its national interests. Between the previous indulgence and the present severity of the English attitude towards violations of the Covenant, the French see a contrast which strikes them as singular. For ten years or more, France has begged England, without avail, to join her in insuring the maintenance of the Covenant and to take her part in the organization of a system of collective security. Is it not exasperating to see England rallying to the Covenant at last after her long detachment has allowed our victory [in the late war] to fritter itself away and has permitted an expansion of German nationalism? It is more exasperating still that England should take this course at the precise moment when the application of this system becomes dangerous for French interests. . . . Was there not a shocking contrast between the softness of England [towards Germany] in March [1935] and the vehemence which she was to display a short while afterwards in defending the Covenant against Italy?<sup>1</sup>

The French were the more ready to take this view of British policy because it not only offered them some justification for venting their spleen but also salved the pricks of conscience; for, if the British championship of the League against Italy was really nothing more than a scandalous piece of British hypocrisy, then the French need not be ashamed of doing less than the English were making a show of doing on the League's behalf.

This French scepticism about British motives was matched by an equally trenchant British scepticism about the motives of the French. For the French, too, were making a *volte-face* which was not the less abrupt because it happened to be in just the opposite direction. They were turning away from the principle of collective security at the moment when the British were turning towards it; and while in French minds the present British professions of faith in the League were discredited by a lively recollection of the previous British lukewarmness, in British minds the present French indifference cast a

<sup>1</sup> Vaucher and Siriex, *op. cit.*, pp. 91, 8, and 23.

retrospective doubt upon the sincerity of those professions of faith which the French had made in the past. 'We always suspected', the British francophobes now declared, 'that the professed zeal of the French for collective security was a sham, and that all the time they were nursing the Covenant as an instrument which, in French designs, was to be used against only one country, namely Germany, on behalf of only one country, namely France; and now our suspicions are confirmed. The mask has been stripped off the ugly countenance of French egotism by the shameless refusal of France to join in any serious application of the Covenant against France's anti-German ally Italy and in favour of her deserted protégée Abyssinia.'

This British attitude towards the policy of France has been well described by the two French observers who have already been quoted.

The curiously complete inversion of rôles between France and Great Britain has caused no less surprise in Great Britain than in France. The British are stupefied at a French policy which boggles at sanctions, sets its face against any automatic application of them, and appears to renounce all interest in the principle of collective security, to forget the existence of Germany, and to let slip the opportunity of making sure of British support against her. It is our most faithful friends [in England] who are the most deeply disconcerted at our behaviour. Upon seeing us displaying so much hesitation and reserve in the month of October [1935] about giving Great Britain the promise of our assistance, the whole of the opposition press turned against us. In the December crisis, it was the unanimous voice of the whole of England which passed judgment on us—and the judgment was severe. The question was put whether we had not allowed our diplomatic suppleness to beguile us into attempting to lead England astray, with us, out of the straight path.<sup>1</sup>

This British indignation at what appeared in British eyes to be the egotistic insincerity of French professions of devotion to the collective system in the past was accompanied by an equally intense stupefaction at the apparent short-sightedness of the French in now rebuffing the British rally to the support of the Covenant. Did not the French realize that, if they now shirked their obligation to uphold the Covenant against Italy, the disillusionment in British minds might cut so deep that the French would run the risk of forfeiting the prospect of British support if the scene of the next breach of the Covenant were to be in Europe and not in Africa, with Germany taking Italy's place as the offender? Had not Sir Samuel Hoare, in his speech in the League Assembly at Geneva on the 11th September, 1935,<sup>2</sup> told his foreign colleagues that the League was 'the main bridge between the United Kingdom and the Continent'—with a clear hint that

<sup>1</sup> Vaucher and Siriex, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-4.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 187, below.

British co-operation with Continental Powers could only be counted upon so long as this bridge was maintained intact? The disillusionment of British opinion over French policy was conveyed to French listeners and readers in plain language by a number of prominent Englishmen in private stations—including some notorious francophiles—while the Franco-German factor in the Italo-Abyssinian issue was discreetly yet pointedly expounded, on at least two occasions, by the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

It is not a question of a particular country; it is a question of a principle [said General Spears in an interview published on the 26th September in *Le Temps*]. If we were to give way over this principle, the very foundations of the League of Nations would be destroyed and therewith the League would cease to exist. It would be impossible, without danger, to interpret the League simply as a mutual insurance arrangement directed against Germany. The Covenant has to be applied either in its entirety and in all circumstances or else not at all. To attempt, to-day, to restrict the range of its application is to expose yourselves to the risk of seeing employed against France the very arguments against the application of the Covenant that are being made use of to-day in certain circles.

On the 26th September, at Geneva, a letter<sup>1</sup> signed by forty-six British men and women of some prominence in public life was presented to Monsieur Laval—who may not have welcomed the zest with which these British correspondents sought to nail him down to his rueful declaration in the Assembly that 'la France restera fidèle au Pacte'. On the same day the *Figaro* published a statement—pleading in much the same terms for 'close and consistent co-operation between France and Great Britain' in support of the Covenant against Italy—from Sir Austen Chamberlain. On the 3rd October (the day on which the Italians actually invaded Abyssinia) the German aspect of the case was underlined by Mr. Baldwin at Bournemouth at a mass meeting in connexion with the Conference of the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations.

The centre of our Empire lies—and, so far as we can see, will lie for many centuries to come—in this island. If this island perish, with all that it stands for, I doubt if the Empire could hold together, and in my view the maintenance of the Empire will depend on the maintenance of the position of this heart of the Empire in Europe. . . .

The whole perspective on the Continent has been altered in the past year or two by the rearming of Germany. I have no reason to believe in hostile intentions. I do not look on Germany or any other country as necessarily a potential foe. I hoped, indeed, for that friendship after the Great War which we have so often succeeded in making with those

<sup>1</sup> Text and signatures in *The Times*, 27th September, 1935.

who have recently been our foes in the field. But I cannot be blind to the fact that the presence of another great nation armed alters the perspective in Europe in the fulfilment of obligations under the League of Nations. I cannot conceal from myself that some day the fulfilment of those obligations may mean that the nations who are fulfilling them may have to maintain by force of arms the Covenant of the League.

The moral for France was drawn by Sir Austen Chamberlain on the 15th October in an interview with Monsieur Bertrand de Jouvenel which was published on the 16th in *Paris Soir*.

We are astonished and—why not say it?—shocked by the apparent hesitation and by the selfish considerations which seem to characterize the French behaviour in this affair. To the question whether we are prepared to maintain the Covenant, to hold to our engagements, the British reply leaves no doubt, while the French reply is uncertain. . . .

If the Covenant triumphs, the confidence that we place in it will be fortified, and Great Britain will have created for herself a precedent that will govern her attitude in other crises to come. If, on the other hand, other nations which have signed the Covenant, which have repeatedly declared their loyalty to it, and which have sometimes accused the representatives of Great Britain of being lukewarm in their support of it, now default on their engagements in this decisive hour, then Great Britain will consider that she has been released from her obligations.

The French interviewer summed up the gist of Sir Austen Chamberlain's statement as follows in his own words:

If you French do not to-day rule out of account your friendship with Italy, if you do not join us in seeing the application of sanctions through to the end, then you must not count upon us in the event of a conflict with Germany.

On the 17th October the Archbishop of Canterbury gave the same French publicist the first interview that he had ever given to a journalist in order to enlighten French opinion as to the sincerity of the motives inspiring British policy. And on the 23rd October the French newspaper *Marianne* published interviews with four British statesmen—Sir Austen Chamberlain, Mr. Attlee, Dr. Dalton and a Liberal leader whose name was not divulged—in which each of them, in his different language, expressed an identical view which coincided exactly with that which Sir Austen Chamberlain had expressed to Monsieur Bertrand de Jouvenel a week earlier.

The question [declared Sir Austen Chamberlain on this occasion] is whether there is such a thing as public law in Europe or whether, for each of us, such law only exists in so far as it happens to serve our particular interests. . . . If, in face of a test like this, the League of Nations shows itself impotent, I think that the immediate effect on British policy will be to reinforce enormously that section of opinion—negligible

up to now—which wants to disinterest itself in Continental European affairs. . . . If, as a result of the present crisis, collective security is destroyed, or if it emerges seriously weakened, I am forced to recognize that this might produce unfortunate reactions—even upon the Pact of Locarno. . . . What the French people ought to be told is this. It is not only the Covenant, or the security which you may enjoy thanks to the provisions of the Covenant, that is at stake at this moment. A check to the League might have unfortunate reactions upon the general attitude of Great Britain.

On the 16th December, 1935, in Paris, at the height of the crisis which had been precipitated by the disclosure of the terms of 'the Laval-Hoare Peace Plan', Lord Cecil made the same point.

It should be possible to establish permanent peace on two conditions—Franco-British co-operation and absolute respect for the rules of the League. The French in the past have been quicker than the British to see the value of the League. It was the more unfortunate that to-day, when Great Britain was at last fully alive to the value of the League, the reply of France to her offers of co-operation should be so strangely disappointing.

Finally, in his apology in the House of Commons at Westminster on the 19th December, Mr. Baldwin put forward the same thesis—that if France were to leave Great Britain in the lurch in vindicating the Covenant against Italy, then it might be impossible, in the next chapter, to induce the British people to support France in vindicating the Covenant against Germany—and the Prime Minister's agreement with his British critics on this interconnexion between the actual Italian and a potential German issue was impressive, even though Mr. Baldwin sought to press this premise into the service of an argument in favour, not of holding France to her League obligations against Italy, but of allowing the British Government to follow suit to the French Government in defaulting on the two Governments' common obligations in the Italo-Abyssinian case.

I am as anxious as any one on any bench in this House not only to preserve the League of Nations but to make it effective, not only now but in the future, and if by any chance—and I will only put it like that—this country had to take part in a unilateral war, even for a short time before others could come in, what I dread is the reaction in this country. I am not thinking of any campaign that might be organized against the Government for bringing the country into war, I am thinking of this: that men will say: 'Well, if by adherence to the League of Nations we find ourselves standing alone to do what ought to be done by everybody, this is the last time we will allow a Government to commit itself with regard to collective security because, for all we know, the next time we have to employ this, the field may be nearer home than the Mediterranean.'

These authoritative British warnings to France were extremely pertinent to the international situation which arose when, on the 7th March, 1936—at a moment when Italy was still vigorously prosecuting her war of aggression against Abyssinia thanks to the prowess of French diplomacy in postponing the application of the ‘oil sanction’—Herr Hitler tore up the Locarno Pact by sending German troops into the demilitarized German territory in the Rhineland.<sup>1</sup>

(g) THE ATTITUDES OF THE SMALLER STATES MEMBERS OF THE LEAGUE

One of the important practical effects of the institution of the League of Nations upon the international life of the Great Society of the day was that of restoring to the lesser states of the World some measure of the influence in international counsels which was theirs by right as well as by tradition, but which had been virtually denied to them under the nineteenth-century system of a ‘Concert of Europe’ that was a euphemism for an exclusive cabal of the European Great Powers.<sup>2</sup> The League gave the smaller states both a forum and a guarantee, because it stood for the reign of Law in international affairs; and it was of the essence of Law—in international no less than in municipal society—that the always inevitable changes in the relations between different members of Society should not be brought about by other than peaceful means. On this account the Covenant had a special value and sanctity for the smaller states members of the League who recognized that a respect for Law was their last, as well as their first, line of defence against a threat to their welfare, or indeed to their existence, as sovereign independent polities—in contrast to the attitude of the states which accounted themselves to be Great Powers and which tacitly gave notice, in assuming this status, that they believed themselves to be capable of holding their own, even in a lawless World, by the strength of their own right arm.

Accordingly Italy’s breach of the Covenant in the flagrant form of an aggressive act of war was execrable in the eyes of the citizens of the smaller states, and this not only *à priori* but almost *ex officio*. For a majority of the states members of the League which came within this category—e.g. for the Latin-American republics; the self-governing Dominions of the British Crown overseas (apart from South Africa); and the West-European ex-neutrals (apart from Switzerland, Spain

<sup>1</sup> This episode will be dealt with in the *Survey for 1936*.

<sup>2</sup> See A. J. Toynbee: *The World after the Peace Conference* (Oxford University Press, 1925), pp. 24 *seqq.*

and Portugal)—this general, but at the same time vital, interest in the vindication of the reign of Law in the international sphere was the sole consideration that moved them, in face of the Italo-Abyssinian conflict, when they were called upon to take their stand on the ground of condemning and hampering the aggressor. In other words, the interest and attitude of the majority of the smaller states members of the League were substantially identical with those of the United Kingdom.

At the same time there was a minority among the states of this class which was also moved by special considerations. For example, the Portuguese and South African opposition to the Italian act of aggression was accentuated by a fear lest this particular international crime might prove, if successful, to be the first step in a new partition of Africa in which Portugal might lose her colonies and the Union of South Africa her existence. The South Africans also dreaded the possible effect of the war in East Africa—which the Italian propaganda was vociferously defending as a war of White Civilization against Black Barbarism—in inflaming the relations between White men and Black men all over the African continent, and thereby incidentally aggravating, for South Africa, her already grave domestic racial problem. On the other hand, the Spaniards and the Swiss were deterred, like the French, from throwing themselves with any zeal into the fulfilment of their obligations under the Covenant in this particular case for fear of falling foul of so formidable a next-door neighbour as Italy threatened to be; and the reluctance of the Swiss was reinforced by their concern to preserve a traditionally recognized neutrality which antedated the foundation of the League of Nations by several centuries and which might conceivably be challenged by a country against which Switzerland actively carried out her post-war obligations under Article 16 of the Covenant.<sup>1</sup> Finally there were two small Danubian countries—the post-war remnants of Austria and Hungary—which found themselves in October 1935 so tightly bound to Italy both politically and economically that they elected to default on their obligations under the Covenant rather than break with their outlawed Italian patroness. And the same choice was made by Albania—if an act of free will can be ascribed to a country which, under the form of a sovereign independent membership of the League, was in reality almost an Italian protectorate.

In this numerous array of small countries the attitude of dis-

<sup>1</sup> For this special Swiss problem of reconciling Swiss obligations under the Covenant with the duties and the privileges of Switzerland's traditional neutrality, see *The World After the Peace Conference*, p. 38.



interested support of the League as the pillar of international law and order found its most impressive exponents in the Scandinavian countries. As early as the 29th August, 1935, the Foreign Ministers of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, sitting in council at Oslo, publicly announced their intention of working for a settlement of the Italo-Abyssinian dispute in accordance with the terms of the Covenant. Already, on the 26th August, the Norwegian Foreign Minister, Monsieur Koht, had declared that Norway was prepared to take part in the application of economic sanctions; and a corresponding declaration was made by a former Swedish Foreign Minister, Monsieur Unden, on the 31st August, 1935. The Scandinavian Governments were as good as their word when the moment came for action in October; and thereafter the Norwegians—notwithstanding the profits that the Norwegian tanker-fleet was making from the transport of oil to Italy—were not among the nations that showed themselves obstructive over the proposal to impose the ‘oil sanction’.<sup>1</sup> Conformably, both the Governments and the public in Scandinavia were as deeply shocked by ‘the Laval-Hoare Peace Plan’ as the public was in Great Britain; and on the 18th December—the day before Sir Samuel Hoare made his apologia, and Mr. Baldwin his recantation, in the House of Commons at Westminster—the new turn of the wheel of British policy was criticized in outspoken terms by the Swedish Foreign Minister, Monsieur Sandler.

What had occurred in the last few days gave rise to serious thought as regarded relations between the great and the small Powers in the League. Those relations might become vastly different from what they were intended [to be]. There was no reason to ignore either the deficiencies in the present organization of the League or its value. The latter would be best understood if the League collapsed, in which event they might well revert to the time when statesmen took lessons from Machiavelli.

This Scandinavian movement of opinion was reflected, in a less demonstrative form, in Holland; and Belgium followed suit—though Belgian statesmanship appears to have shared to some extent the French Government’s misgivings over the possibility that the application of sanctions against Italy might have adverse effects upon the international situation in Transalpine Europe.

The overseas Dominions of the British Crown likewise came into line with the other smaller states members of the League, although none of them except South Africa had any direct stake in the East African conflict. The Australian Government were not deterred from

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 275 *seqq.*, below.

taking part in the application of sanctions by the vociferous opposition of Labour; nor was Canada by the particular memory of the Chanāq incident or by her general instinct, as a North American community, to shrink from European entanglements. The Canadian Government did, however, on the 1st December, 1935, disown responsibility for the action of their accredited representative at Geneva, Mr. Riddell, who had initiated in the Committee of Eighteen, on the 2nd November, the historic resolution in favour of the conditional extension of the embargo against Italy to the four additional commodities of oil, coal, iron and steel.<sup>1</sup>

Among the Latin-American states members of the League—not to speak of Brazil, the largest of the Latin-American republics, whose secession from the League had taken effect on the 14th June, 1928—there was a more pronounced tendency to hesitate over the imposition of sanctions against Italy: partly, perhaps, because the strategic and political remoteness of Latin America from the scene of the conflict made the economic sacrifices that were demanded loom larger in proportion to the value of the vindication of the principle of international law and order; and also perhaps partly because the important Italian element in the population of the leading Latin-American countries naturally threw its weight into the political scales on the anti-sanctions side. All the same, when it came to the point, Paraguay was the only Latin-American state member that defaulted on her obligations under the Covenant by refusing to apply the sanctions that were recommended by the Committee of Eighteen; and this Latin-American loyalty to the Covenant was a matter of moment not only on political grounds as a demonstration of solidarity, but also on economic grounds in view of the importance of the Latin-American market for the Italian textile industry.

Among the smaller states whose loyal execution of their obligations under the Covenant was particularly notable, some mention must be made of Poland, Bulgaria and the Irish Free State. Poland came into line with her fellow states members rather unexpectedly at the eleventh hour, though the recent trend of her foreign policy—her bilateral understanding with Germany and her assertion of national sovereignty against international obligations in the matter of the treaty between Poland and the Principal Allied Powers for the protection of minorities in Poland<sup>2</sup>—might have been expected to incline her to align herself with Italy against the League. Bulgaria, likewise, came into line in spite of being a revisionist state who was linked with Italy by a dynastic marriage as well as by a common un-

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 273-4, below.

<sup>2</sup> See the *Survey for 1934*, pp. 396-8.

friendliness towards Jugoslavia. And the Irish Free State came into line notwithstanding the fact that Mr. de Valera's *bête noire* the United Kingdom—with whom he was at that time still engaged in an economic war—was playing the part of protagonist in the championship of the Covenant against Italy. In following what he believed to be the right course for Ireland, in spite of the fact that it happened to be coincident with the course of British policy, Mr. de Valera showed a single-mindedness and a magnanimity which were perhaps rare among the politicians of his generation; and he showed an equally notable courage in refusing to be deflected from his path by the gibes of his Irish political opponents.<sup>1</sup>

If the merit of the Irish Free State, Bulgaria and Poland in fulfilling their obligations under the Covenant in the Italo-Abyssinian dispute deserves an honourable mention for the reasons here suggested, it would be logical to discount, in corresponding measure, the merit of the states members of the Little Entente and the Balkan Entente, since these were states which, like France and the U.S.S.R., were obsessed, beyond the average degree, with a sense of insecurity, while, unlike France, they had no special hopes of Italian support to weigh in the balance of interest against the advantage which they stood to gain from a successful vindication of the general principle of collective security. The Turks and Greeks and Jugoslavs positively disliked and feared Italy,<sup>2</sup> and their Rumanian and Czechoslovak associates were under no temptation to show indulgence to Hungary's patroness. These political considerations far outweighed the serious material sacrifices which the participation in economic sanctions exacted from Jugoslavia and Rumania at any rate. During the crisis

<sup>1</sup> In facing his constituents after his return from Geneva, Mr. de Valera is reported to have defended his policy by putting to them the question: 'If I am on the road to Heaven, and if I see a man whom I don't much like travelling side by side with me in the same direction, am I to change my course because of that?' The writer of this *Survey*, who spent a few days in Dublin in November 1935, soon discovered that if any Irishman with whom he discussed the international crisis expressed a sympathy for Italy, he could be sure of obtaining an answer in the affirmative if he asked his interlocutor: 'Then are you a supporter of Mr. Cosgrave?'

<sup>2</sup> The complementary Turkish sympathy for Abyssinia was shown officially by the despatch, from Angora to Addis Ababa, of the first Turkish *chargé d'affaires* that had been accredited to the Ethiopian Government since the General War of 1914-18, and the first Turkish military *attaché* that had ever been posted in Abyssinia. The *chargé d'affaires* arrived before, the military *attaché* after, the outbreak of hostilities in East Africa. In an unofficial but more effective way, Turkish good-will was also shown by the enlistment of a distinguished Turkish soldier, Vehib Pasha, in the Ethiopian service as a military adviser. Vehib Pasha was posted to the vital section of the southern front which covered Jigjiga and Harrar.

precipitated by the presentation of 'the Laval-Hoare Peace Plan', the Councils of the Little Entente and the Balkan Entente met in joint session, under the chairmanship of Monsieur Titulescu, on the 20th December, 1935, and announced that they had 'renewed their decision in favour of a strict and loyal application of the Covenant of the League of Nations, and also in favour of common action among themselves in the circumstances of the moment'.

The South African attitude is perhaps sufficiently interesting, both for its own sake and for its effect upon public opinion and upon governmental policy in Great Britain, to deserve a rather closer examination.

As early as the 12th August a note of alarm was sounded by so experienced and authoritative a statesman as General Smuts, in an interview which contained the following passage:

If Italy becomes seriously involved in Abyssinia and is badly crippled there by a long conflict, a very serious position may be created in Europe.

It is possible that Great Britain may be able to keep out of this as far as Europe is concerned, but a great conflict in Africa, on the borders of British territory, must have serious repercussions on British territories in North Africa as well as the Sudan and Egypt.

There is no doubt in my mind that the invasion of Abyssinia by Italy will arouse anxious feelings all over Africa between White and Black. We have seen what effect the Russo-Japanese War had in raising feeling between Europe and Asia, and this Abyssinian adventure by Italy may be most far-reaching in its effect on the African mind.

The African does not look on the European as an enemy, but this trouble may raise intense racial colour feeling and make the position of the European much more difficult. It may spread all over the African continent. You may find that every African will sympathize with Abyssinia.

The fear that an Italian attack upon Abyssinia might 'upset relations between Black and White throughout the World' was echoed by the Union Minister for Agriculture, Colonel Reitz, in an interview which he gave on the 19th August upon his return from a visit to Europe. And on the 4th September the Union Prime Minister, General Hertzog, declared in a public speech, with reference to the Italo-Abyssinian crisis:

In my opinion it is the beginning of a long, and, if we must judge from what has gone before, one of the bloodiest and cruellest periods the World has ever known.

On the 8th September General Hertzog issued an official statement declaring the attitude of the South African Government to be 'that the League should do its duty'.

Sir Samuel Hoare's speech of the 11th September at Geneva was warmly approved by South African public opinion; and it was followed up on the 13th, in the same international forum, by a speech from the South African delegate to the Assembly of the League, in which Mr. te Water gave voice to the two fears that were now haunting South African minds: the fear of a new partition of Africa by violence, and the fear of a wholesale militarization of native African populations which were, or might come to be, under the rule of certain European Powers.<sup>1</sup> Nor was this indignation and dismay at the behaviour of Italy confined to South Africans in high places. On the 12th August a protest against the subsidizing, by the Union Government, of the export of meat for the Italian troops in East Africa was addressed to General Hertzog by the General Secretary of the South African Trades and Labour Council; and on the 31st August the dockworkers at Capetown decided to refuse to load frozen beef into an Italian ship. This action was supported by the Cape Federation of Trades against General Hertzog's strongly expressed remonstrances, while the question of the subsidy became the subject of a stubborn political controversy.

On the 18th October the danger of the militarization of the manpower of the Empire of Ethiopia in the event of its being conquered by Italy was underlined by General Smuts in a speech delivered at Pretoria and by Sir Abe Bailey in a letter published in London on the same day in the columns of *The Times*. By this time the anti-Italian feeling in the Union was running high; and South Africa was the first state member of the League to report that it had put into force all the sanctions that were recommended in October by the Committee of Eighteen.<sup>2</sup> These measures were brought into effect by a proclamation issued in Pretoria on the 30th of that month.

On the 9th November Sir Abe Bailey returned to the charge, on the question of the militarization of the Blacks, in a letter which was published in *The Daily Telegraph* on the 11th; and on the latter day, which was the anniversary of Armistice Day, General Smuts, at Pretoria, delivered a message of encouragement.

The League was not moribund or on its last legs, but only finding its feet. It was only at the beginning of its career. Henceforth it would more and more stand forth as a determined foe to that imperialism, that spirit of aggressive expansion and annexation characteristic of the old pre-War order, which it was fondly thought was killed in the Great War, but which was once more showing its horrid head in world affairs.

<sup>1</sup> Passages from this speech are quoted, in another context, on pp. 190-1, below.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 223 *seqq.*, below.

On the 4th December, at Johannesburg, the Union Minister of the Interior, Mr. Hofmeyr, declared that the South Africans, 'as a Government and a nation', were 'determined that nothing' should 'interfere with the carrying out of' their 'obligations under the League Covenant'. And on the same day in London, at a meeting of the General Council of the League of Nations Union, a message was read from General Smuts in which the South African statesman congratulated this private society in the United Kingdom on 'the marked effect which its propaganda' had 'produced on public opinion'.

So far from sympathizing with the Italians as fellow White men who had set themselves to subdue the last remaining stronghold of rampant Black Barbarism, the Afrikaners sympathized with the Amharas as a fellow African nation that was fighting for its independence and for its life against a fresh wave of European imperialism which was a menace to the whole African continent. And these feelings seem to have been genuinely felt by South African White men who at that very moment were agitating for the withdrawal of the provincial franchise in the Cape Province from their coloured fellow subjects. To an Italian or even an English observer this dualism in the South African attitude might seem difficult to comprehend. Yet the genuineness of the South African sympathy with Abyssinia was demonstrated once again in the vehemence of the disapproval with which 'the Laval-Hoare Peace Plan' was received by South African public opinion.

While the Portuguese were moved by the same strong feelings as the South Africans—and this on much the same grounds—the Spaniards, who at this date had no African colonies, worth considering, left to lose, were more powerfully moved by a lively sense of their own weakness and of Italy's close neighbourhood. When it came to the point Spain fulfilled her obligations under the Covenant like her Latin-American daughter republics; but on the 3rd October, 1935, the Government had to reject a demand, put forward in the Cortes at Madrid, that Spain should declare her neutrality in the Italo-Abyssinian war, instead of playing her due part in the frustration of the aggressor; and at a later stage the Spanish Government appeared to have shown considerable perturbation on receiving the inquiry—addressed by the British Government to all states members of the League with coast-lines on the Mediterranean—as to whether they would be prepared to lend the British Navy their material support in the event of an Italian attack on Great Britain on account of her fulfilment of her obligations under Article 16 of the Covenant.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For this British inquiry, see section (viii) below.

The Spanish misgivings over the implementation of Article 16 were shared by the Swiss—and this, perhaps, on more substantial grounds. Yet Switzerland, too, when it came to the point, ranged herself with the overwhelming majority of her fellow states members of the League who applied economic sanctions against Italy, instead of with the defaulting trio consisting of Austria, Hungary and Albania. The main licence that Switzerland allowed herself, as a concession to her anxiety to preserve her inherited neutral status, was to maintain her embargo upon the export of war-materials to Abyssinia, while placing a corresponding embargo upon the export of the same commodities to Italy. Besides this, Switzerland took account of her geographical proximity to Italy by refraining from applying completely the Committee of Eighteen's recommendation that states members of the League should decline to receive Italian exports. And in the third place the terms of the Swiss-Italian-German convention of the 13th October, 1909, debarred Switzerland from interrupting the traffic between Italy and Germany across Swiss territory through the St. Gothard tunnel.<sup>1</sup> On the whole, however, Swiss policy in this crisis was governed less by special Swiss considerations, and more by the general consideration of upholding international law and order, than had been expected by some foreign observers.

The embarrassment of the Swiss Government over the application of Article 16 against Italy was trivial by comparison with the embarrassment which the Austrian Government had to face on the internal as well as on the international front.

On the internal front Dr. von Schuschnigg's administration had to cope with a wave of popular sympathy in Austria for the Abyssinians, as fellow victims of the South Tirolese Austrians under the heel of Italian imperialism—a sympathy which was reinforced by indignation at seeing the men of military age in the South Tirol being conscripted by the Italian Government and shipped overseas in order to risk, and perhaps lose, their lives for the sake of Italian ambitions at the Abyssinians' expense. Some hundreds, or possibly thousands, of post-war Italian subjects of Austrian nationality in the South Tirol made good their escape across the Italo-Austrian frontier rather than obey Signor Mussolini's mobilization order; and these refugees remained within the post-war Austrian frontiers—as living testi-

<sup>1</sup> Article 3 of this convention ran as follows: 'Sauf les cas de force majeure, la Suisse assurera l'exploitation du chemin de fer du St. Gothard contre toute interruption. Toutefois la Suisse a le droit de prendre les mesures nécessaires pour le maintien de la neutralité et pour la défense du pays.'

monies to the oppressiveness of the Italian yoke—except in so far as they travelled on into Germany. The experience of the Hapsburg Monarchy itself, during the War of 1914–18, indicated that the political effect of this exodus was likely to be ineradicable. During those years the non-German and non-Magyar subject nationalities of the Danubian Monarchy, who had sullenly endured a distasteful alien régime in peace time, had made up their minds that they could no longer bear to live under a political system that had the physical power, as well as the legal right, to compel them to fight and die for the defeat of their own national aspirations. The mobilization of the Czech, Polish, Slovene, Slovak, Ukrainian, Yugoslav and Rumanian subjects of the Dual Monarchy in 1914 had been the fatal act which had made the break-up of the Monarchy in 1918 inevitable; and on this precedent it might be prophesied that the liberation of the South Tirol from Italian rule was likely to be the ultimate consequence of Signor Mussolini's mobilization of the South-Tirolese Austrians for his African adventure in 1935. By this act the South Tirolese question had been reopened with a violence that might prevent it from being closed again until the Italian flag had been withdrawn from the Brenner to some line between Botzen and Trento.

In the face of a public opinion at home which had been thus inflamed by the sight of South-Tirolese refugees into feeling that, after all, Italy was Austria's hereditary enemy, the Austrian Government's posture of standing by Italy, on the ground of her being Austria's special friend and benefactress, was sufficiently difficult to maintain; yet this domestic problem was not more formidable than the international embarrassments to which Dr. von Schuschnigg and his colleagues were exposing themselves. By defaulting—and this with only two accomplices—on obligations under the Covenant which fifty-two other states members of the League were agreeing to honour, the Austrian Government were not merely displaying an invidious ingratitude for past services rendered to Austria by the League which had been at least as valuable as any benefits that had been conferred upon Austria by Italy individually; in the same act the Austrian Government were putting themselves out of court, in advance, against the day (which might come at any time) when it might be Austria's turn, instead of Abyssinia's, to call upon her fellow states members of the League to honour their engagements by coming to her assistance against an aggressor.

In terms of sheer *Realpolitik*, it was by no means clear in October 1935 that it was worth Austria's while to forfeit her claim to protection by the League for the sake of preserving her claim to protection



by Italy. If Italy's strength were gradually drained out of Europe by the demands of her African war, it might be expected that the time would come when Italy would cease to be capable of making a military demonstration on the Brenner of the kind that had saved the Dollfuss régime in Austria after Dr. Dollfuss's own death in July 1934. And Herr Hitler would assuredly be quick to take advantage of a situation in which Italy no longer had the power, and the League no longer had the duty, to intervene in order to prevent the *Anschluss* of Austria to the Third Reich. These agonizing questions were answered by Dr. von Schuschnigg and his colleagues, in the autumn of 1935, in favour of staking the whole future of their régime upon the maintenance of the Italian protectorate. To an outside observer this choice seemed at the time so ill-advised—even from the nakedly Machiavellian point of view—that it could hardly be ascribed to an objective judgment in favour of the arguments supporting it, but pointed rather to the existence of a personal tie between Dr. von Schuschnigg and Signor Mussolini which, in the Austrian Chancellor's eyes, must have been indispensable for the maintenance of his own position in his own country.

If this was the impression which Dr. von Schuschnigg's policy made upon impartial observers, nothing could have been more agreeable to Dr. Goebbels's Propaganda Ministry in Berlin, which had been proclaiming all along that, under the mask of a championship of an alleged Austrian nationalism, Dr. Dollfuss and Dr. von Schuschnigg were in reality 'the running dogs of a foreign imperialism' (to apply the apt term of abuse with which the Chinese nationalists sought to discredit their own Chinese opponents during the anti-foreign campaign in China in 1925-6).<sup>1</sup> In fact, Signor Mussolini's wilful act of aggression in Africa had compelled the unhappy Dr. von Schuschnigg at Vienna to assume, before the eyes of a disapproving World, the humiliating rôle that had always been ascribed to him by his National-Socialist adversaries.

While the Austrian Government showed the utmost embarrassment in making this painful and momentous choice of ranging themselves at the Italian Government's side in October 1935, the Hungarian Government marched into the Mussolinian camp with a gesture of truculence, and almost with an air of glee, that aroused a widespread disapproval and resentment throughout the World—in contrast to the measure of understanding and sympathy which the public opinion of Mankind had found itself able to extend to Dr. von Schuschnigg. The marked difference of manner with which the Austrian and

<sup>1</sup> See the *Survey* for 1926, p. 339.

Hungarian Governments took an identical step perceptibly increased the unpopularity of Hungary, without perceptibly diminishing the popularity of Austria, in the eyes of the international public.

(h) THE ATTITUDES OF GERMANY, THE UNITED STATES AND EGYPT

Having now passed in review the attitudes of the states members of the League of Nations towards the Italo-Abyssinian conflict, we may go on to consider the attitudes of three neutral countries—Germany, the United States and Egypt—which were each, in various ways, capable of exercising a great and even perhaps a decisive influence upon the outcome of the crisis, while at the same time all three of them were torn, like Austria, between conflicting and perhaps incompatible considerations.

In the matter of influencing the outcome of the crisis, Egypt and Germany, as well as the United States, had it in their power to increase or diminish, rather seriously, the effectiveness of the economic sanctions that were being imposed upon Italy by the states members of the League; and while even Germany—not to speak of Egypt—was not a factor in the economic life of the World which could be compared, for importance, with the United States, the European and the African neutral's intrinsic economic inferiority to the American neutral was offset to some extent by a geographical proximity—to the metropolitan territory of the aggressor state in the one case, and to the seat of war in the other. From the strategical standpoint, again, the position of both Germany and Egypt was a more vital element in the international situation arising from Italy's act of aggression than the position of the United States. For although, during the last three months of the year 1935, it is possible that an uncertainty as to the line which the United States Government would take may have been one of the considerations that deterred Mr. Baldwin from entertaining any idea of subjecting the aggressor to a blockade, it may be guessed that the fear of an American assertion of neutral rights at sea was not one of those secret terrors that kept the lips of the British Prime Minister sealed. If his nights were indeed disturbed by nightmares, these nerve-racking visions are more likely to have been mental pictures of British troops and warships being overwhelmed by Italian tanks and sleds and aeroplanes on Egyptian territory or territorial waters, or of the German Reichswehr crossing the Rhine. The possibility of an Italian attack upon the British forces in Egypt was undoubtedly the acutest anxiety of the British Government at this time, while the French Government, for

their part, were afraid, above all things, lest Herr Hitler should take advantage of the break-up of 'the Stresa Front' (as he did, in the end, on the 7th March, 1936) in order to reoccupy, without asking leave, the demilitarized zone of German territory in the Rhineland. This fear of some German military *coup* in Transalpine Europe was undoubtedly by far the strongest of the various political considerations which were all the time tempting the French and British Governments to treat Signor Mussolini with the utmost leniency, and even indulgence, that could be represented by diplomatic ingenuity as being consistent with the terms of the League Covenant.

Herr Hitler might perhaps have taken advantage of the situation sooner than he did—that is to say, without waiting until five months after Italy had been proclaimed an aggressor—if he, too, had not been distracted by a conflict between incompatible considerations. Was the master of the Third Reich to throw his weight into the Mussolinian or into the Genevan scale, or was he rather to distribute it between the two scales with a neutral evenness? In defying the League of Nations and denouncing the collective system of security and repudiating his own international undertakings, Signor Mussolini, in Herr Hitler's eyes, was perhaps unwillingly but nevertheless effectively fighting Herr Hitler's battle. For in the international field it was one of Herr Hitler's main contentions, in this chapter of his foreign policy, that the so-called principle of collective security was a mere diplomatic screen behind which the Powers that had emerged with great possessions from the scramble in 1914–18 were seeking to perpetuate the post-war *status quo* in their own short-sightedly selfish interests. Thus, in Herr Hitler's eyes, the Covenant represented a system which was not only hypocritical and immoral but was also doomed to be ephemeral because it was a defiance of the natural law that Life involves Change. And therefore the Führer could not but rejoice to see the Duce thrusting his mailed fist through the paper scenery of the Genevan stage, and could not but hope that this scenery really was a sham, as both he and his Italian confrère had confidently declared it to be. For suppose that, instead of poking his fingers through a screen, Mussolini were to run his head against a brick wall and collapse in a concussion instead of dramatically sweeping all this post-war bric-à-brac out of the international arena: What would happen then? Why, then, the result of Signor Mussolini's bold experiment might be to place the collective system on permanent foundations instead of dealing it its *coup de grâce*; and then what might become of Herr Hitler's own ambitions in the international field? Worse than that, a defeat at the hands of the Genevan

institution might seriously weaken Signor Mussolini's standing, even if it did not shake him quite off his pedestal; and this might have untoward effects upon Herr Hitler's own foothold; for the goodly company of contemporary dictators was patently subject to the same law of dynamics—or of sympathetic magic—as a file of tin soldiers or a row of ninepins. If one piece were once knocked over, all the others in the line might go down with a run as the impact of the original blow was passed on from one to the other.

If these considerations had been all that Herr Hitler had to take into account, he might have ranged himself at Signor Mussolini's side shoulder to shoulder with Dr. von Schuschnigg. It was, however, decidedly more difficult for the Chancellor of the Third Reich to align himself with the Chancellor of the Austrian Republic than it was for the President of the Council of Ministers of the Irish Free State to travel the same road as the Prime Minister of His Britannic Majesty's Government at Westminster. An unsolved Austrian question was a gulf between the Italian and the German dictator which was too wide and too deep for Herr Hitler to cross.

It will be seen that Signor Mussolini's act of aggression had impaled Herr Hitler on the horns of a dilemma. If he were to leave his Italian counterpart to his fate he would be running the risk of allowing the principle of collective security to score a perhaps decisive success, and at the same time be allowing the legend of the invincibility of dictators to suffer a perhaps fatally damaging exposure. On the other hand, if he were to intervene in a way that would ensure Signor Mussolini's triumph, Herr Hitler would be deliberately fortifying, and not simply preserving, the most serious obstacle to the realization of his own darling ambition: the *Anschluss* of Austria to the Third Reich. The divergent pull of these two almost diametrically contrary considerations resolved itself into a policy of neutrality under which Germany refrained on the one hand from participating in the League sanctions and on the other hand from expanding her trade with Italy much beyond the volume at which it had stood before the sanctions were imposed.

A resolution of divergent forces was likewise the determinant of the policy of the United States. In American public opinion, as evoked by the Italo-Abyssinian conflict, three distinct tendencies could be discerned.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These three tendencies come out very clearly in the *compte rendu* of a 'conference for university men on neutrality and collective action' which was held on the 6th-7th February, 1936, in New York under the auspices of the Council on Foreign Relations. Out of seventeen university men of the younger generation—drawn from Columbia, Harvard, Princeton and Yale—four

In the first place there were the advocates of the traditional American policy of insisting, up to the hilt, upon the enjoyment of neutral rights (as these were understood according to the non-moral modern conception of international law which had prevailed in the Western World during the four centuries ending in A.D. 1914). This traditional American policy represented a compromise between the two guiding principles of foreign policy with which the new-born republic had emerged from the Revolutionary War of A.D. 1775-83: on the one hand a determination to avoid all foreign (which meant, in practice, all European) entanglements, and on the other hand a no less vehement determination to assert the new-found national sovereignty of the United States against all comers. The observance of the former of these two guiding principles had saved the Americans from being involved in belligerency upon the outbreak of either of the two general wars—the war of 1792-1815 and the war of 1914-18—which had taken place since the achievement of American independence; on the other hand, the simultaneous insistence upon the second of the two principles—that is, upon the traditional privileges of sovereignty—had in both cases involved the United States in belligerency before the war came to a close.

During and immediately after the General War of 1914-18 the prevailing impulse in the United States was to continue to insist upon the sovereign right of trading, as a neutral, with a belligerent, even if this did involve the loss of American neutrality before the fighting was over. This was the meaning of the United States' intervention in the war against Germany in 1917, and it was also the meaning of her determination to attain naval parity with the British Empire—an aim which she duly accomplished between 1916 and 1930. This traditional policy was supported for a political reason by nationalists who valued the assertion of American sovereignty for its own sake, and for an economic reason by business men who stood to earn high profits by selling essential supplies to belligerents at war prices. In the last war, however, in which the United States had asserted her sovereign neutral rights at the ultimate cost of becoming a belligerent herself, the price of belligerency for the American people had been conscription for active military service in Europe for all male citizens of suitable age and physique; and, in the light of this

proved to be isolationists and five collectivists, while eight were in favour of the maintenance of the traditional American policy of neutrality, with some attenuation of the traditional American conception of neutral rights. Statements of the three points of view by the respective spokesmen of each party were published in a brochure, under the title cited between inverted commas above, by the Council on Foreign Relations.

experience, the American public in the post-war years was susceptible to the suggestion that, under a smoke-screen of patriotism, a small minority of profiteers had snatched their exorbitant gains out of a war which was no concern of the United States, and had made the American people at large foot the bill by paying a blood-tax. This way of looking at the picture placed the traditional American policy in an odious light from the standpoint of the American man-in-the-street; and, if once this view were accepted, the moral was evident. The traditional American policy of insistence upon neutral rights was a 'ramp' on the part of 'the interests' at the expense of the true interest of the American commonweal. The objective which represented the true interest of the American people, and which therefore ought to be pursued at any price, was not the liberty of a few Americans to trade with the belligerents, but the liberty of all Americans to safeguard themselves against being called upon to lay down their lives for the profit of a minority in a quarrel between foreigners.

From this root there sprang up, during the years immediately preceding the outbreak of the Italo-Abyssinian War on the 3rd October, 1935, a doctrine which was a new portent in the field of American foreign policy—the doctrine that the supreme and overriding interest of the United States, in face of a war between other parties, was not the vindication of American neutral rights, but the preservation of American non-belligerency as the highest good of the American people in such circumstances.

These were the two opposing programmes of foreign policy which contended with one another overtly for the captivation of American public opinion during the last three months of the year 1935. There was also a third line of policy—too heretical to be openly avowed—which was rife among the 'highbrows', and which the President of the Republic and the officials of the State Department were gravely suspected of wishing to pursue if they dared. This third line was a cautious support of the collective system of international relations from a conviction of the rightness and the expediency of international solidarity for the vindication of the rule of law in world affairs. This was, however, no more than a fad of the *intelligentsia*—a class which was even smaller and weaker in America than it was in Europe—and it was a heresy to which no American intellectual who was in an official position, however eminent, could subscribe publicly without running the risk of being swiftly thrown out of office. Accordingly it was not practical politics for the Administration, and not good business for any private political propagandist organization, to advocate openly and directly a collectivist policy, even in the most

drastically attenuated form, as the proper policy for the United States; and the American collectivists' only hope of making any headway along their own highly unpopular course was to trim their sails in such fashion as to catch the wind of one of the two other programmes and then beat their way, in the wind's eye, by skilful and industrious tacking.

As it happened, the course which would have been prescribed by an American programme of supporting the principle of collective security coincided, in practice, with the course which was actually prescribed by an American programme of isolationism as an ultimate and overriding objective of American foreign policy. For isolationism meant severing all economic relations with both belligerents in order to make sure of avoiding the risk of being drawn into belligerency through falling into a dispute with either belligerent over the question of the neutral's right of trading with each of them; and if the United States did take such independent action in her own interests, this would chime in with the action which the states members of the League of Nations were taking, in pursuance of the Covenant, on behalf of collective security. A bilateral American economic boycott of both Italy and Abyssinia would complete, and thereby render effective, the League members' unilateral boycott of Italy—and it would accomplish this result without rendering ineffective the League members' deliberate discrimination in favour of Abyssinia, since Abyssinia would still be able to purchase from the states members of the League (other than Albania, Hungary, Austria and Switzerland) the supplies that the United States would be withholding from her and from Italy indiscriminately.

On this reckoning the collective-minded minority in the United States threw its influence into the scales in favour of the new programme of isolationism as against the old policy of insisting upon neutral rights. But it was perhaps questionable whether this support—disinterested and enlightened though it was—did not hinder rather than help the isolationist cause; for it brought the isolationists under suspicion of 'playing Europe's game'; and the tradition of positive political ill will towards Europe was still so strong in the United States that any programme for an American policy would be seriously discredited in the eyes of a large section of the American public if it could be shown to work out for Europe's advantage, even if it were also demonstrably advantageous for the American people, and even if the benefit to Europe were quite incidental and unintentional. Accordingly the advocates of the old-fashioned programme of insisting upon neutral rights seized eagerly upon the point that the

newfangled programme of isolationism was welcome to the League of Nations and to its American supporters ; and they did their utmost to transfer the whole debate to this ground, as an easier option than the rather formidable task of rebutting their opponents' argument that isolationism, rather than neutral rights, represented the true interest of the American man-in-the-street

These were the lines—rather captious and perverse lines in the sight of a neutral observer—that were taken by a domestic controversy in the United States which was of momentous importance for the outcome of the contest in the international arena between Italy and her fellow states members of the League.

As for Egypt, who was the third of the three important neutral parties in the Italo-Abyssinian conflict, she, too, was pulled in contrary directions by considerations arising out of her own special position.

In the first place, Egyptian public opinion was unanimously and keenly sympathetic towards Abyssinia as the victim of a predatory attack on Italy's part ; and this sympathy had several roots. There was a religious and ecclesiastical link between the Coptic Christian minority of the Egyptian people and the Amharas, who were not only their coreligionists but had also originally acquired their common Monophysite Christianity from an Egyptian source and still imported from Egypt the successive primates of the Ethiopian Monophysite Church—this office of Abūna (*Arabicè*, 'Our Father') being reserved, by prescription, for being held by an Egyptian monk who was the nominee of the Coptic Patriarch of Alexandria. Since the Copts were largely Egyptian Nationalists in feeling, and were influential—out of proportion to their numerical strength in the population—in the counsels of the Wafd, this special link between the Amharas and the Copts had the effect of a general link between the Ethiopian and Egyptian peoples. At the same time, the Egyptian sympathy for Abyssinia rested on broader foundations ; for in Egypt, as in Abyssinia, there was a strongly pronounced tendency towards a Muslim-Christian *union sacrée* in the face of an aggressive Frankish imperialism ; and, over and above this, the Egyptians, as an African people that was aspiring to recover its independence after having been long deprived of it, had a special fellow feeling for the Abyssinians as a sister African people which was in danger of losing its independence after having managed to preserve it—alone among African peoples<sup>1</sup>—down to this date.

<sup>1</sup> In addition to Abyssinia, there were two other African countries—Liberia and the Union of South Africa—which were independent in A.D. 1935 ; but



This positive and spontaneous Egyptian sympathy for Abyssinia was reinforced by an anxiety lest the unprovoked aggression on Italy's part, of which Abyssinia was the victim to-day, might threaten Egypt to-morrow, should Signor Mussolini bring his Abyssinian adventure to a successful issue in spite of the military resistance of the Abyssinians and the economic sanctions that were being applied by the states members of the League. Egypt was nearer and more accessible than Abyssinia was to an Italian invader; she lacked the natural defences with which Abyssinia was endowed by her physical configuration; she was an intrinsically far more desirable prey; and the Italians already had a lodgment in Egypt in the shape of an Italian community, nearly 70,000 strong, which, like most of the other foreign communities in Egypt, was still in unattenuated enjoyment of those extra-territorial privileges which were one of Egypt's disagreeable legacies from the old Ottoman régime.

Now that a Fascist Italian imperialism was on the war-path on two sides of Egypt—in Ethiopia as well as in Libya—the Egyptians appreciated the wisdom of Aesop's dog, who preferred to keep his old blood-sated ticks rather than to exchange them for new voracious ones. In 1935 the Egyptians were frankly ready to declare that, if they must continue to put up with the domination of some foreign Power, pending the attainment of complete independence, then it was less perilous, as well as less unpleasant, to remain in the hands of a sated Power, like Great Britain, than to fall into the hands of a hungry Power like Italy. Accordingly the Egyptian, like the Irish, Government refused to allow their policy in the Italo-Abyssinian conflict to be determined by the mere distastefulness of following a British lead. Egypt was the only state non-member of the League of Nations which applied in full against Italy the sanctions that were recommended to the states members by the Committee of Eighteen. And when British naval and aerial and military reinforcements began to arrive in Egypt in the autumn of 1935 the Egyptians' first reaction was to welcome their presence—for the first time in the history of Anglo-Egyptian relations.

If, however, the Egyptians were convinced—as a result of Signor Mussolini's aggressive demonstrations on the Italian side of the frontier between Egypt and Libya—of the desirability of a permanent co-operation between Egypt and Great Britain, their second thoughts

both the Liberians and the White South Africans were recent arrivals—the Liberians having only come from America since the nineteenth century and the South Africans from Europe since the seventeenth—whereas the Amharas had arrived in Africa from Asia before the beginning of the Christian Era.

were that it had now become urgently necessary to place Anglo-Egyptian relations on a regular footing in the shape of a freely negotiated treaty between the two countries to cover the four points that had remained unsettled ever since the unilateral British declaration of a limited Egyptian independence on the 28th February, 1922.<sup>1</sup>

Hitherto the settlement of these outstanding issues between Egypt and Great Britain had been treated by both parties as a matter which could always bear postponement and on which they could therefore each indulge in exhibitions of intransigence which were as gratifying to a public at home as they were fatal to the prospects of any agreement between the two Governments. In the autumn of 1935 both the Egyptians and the English suddenly woke up to find that the rather irresponsible dilatoriness of which they had hitherto made almost a virtue on both sides had now resulted in their being overtaken by a situation which was disagreeably dangerous for them both. The Egyptians now saw their country in imminent danger of becoming a theatre of war between two European Great Powers in a quarrel in which Egypt had no voice and in a juridical position in which the Egyptian Government were politically no more able to proclaim their neutrality *de jure* than they were militarily competent to defend it *de facto*. At any moment Alexandria might be bombarded from the sea and Cairo bombed from the air and the Delta invaded from the desert, while the inhabitants of Egypt would be as helpless to save themselves from these dreadful calamities as if they were part of the inanimate scenery of their country instead of being its citizens. On the other side the English—with Signor Mussolini's hand outstretched over the vital Egyptian node of the British Empire's strategic and commercial lines of communication—now probably realized more vividly than ever before the desirability of establishing relations of mutual goodwill and confidence with the people of a country in which the British Empire's footing was at once so important and so precarious. Supposing, for example, that an insurrection on the scale of that of 1919 had rankled out of the anti-British riots which had been provoked, before the end of the year, by Sir Samuel Hoare's procrastination over the opening of Anglo-Egyptian negotiations: in such an event, would the British have been able to cope simultaneously with the Egyptians in their rear and with the Italians on their Libyan front? These chastening reflections, which duly occurred to the wiser minds on both sides, did result, after Sir Samuel Hoare had been succeeded at the Foreign Office in Whitehall by Mr. Anthony Eden,

<sup>1</sup> See *The History of the Peace Conference of Paris*, vol. vi, pp. 203-4.

in the initiation of a fresh attempt, which will be recorded in a later volume of this series, to arrive at a comprehensive Anglo-Egyptian settlement.

(i) THE ATTITUDE OF THE HOLY SEE

Up to this point in our survey of human motives and attitudes in the matter of the Italo-Abyssinian conflict we have been marshalling Mankind by nations and national Governments; and this method of review is unavoidable in any attempt to take stock of the behaviour of a generation which had allowed itself to fall into these national formations; yet even the nationalized human being of A.D. 1935 could not be a Frenchman or an Englishman, or whatever his national docket might be, without first being just a man; and as a man he was not, even at this date, even in the totalitarian states, simply and solely a member of this or that national group. Besides being an Englishman or a Frenchman or an Italian or an Ethiopian, he was a White Man or a Black Man, and he was also, beyond this superficial distinction of race, a Christian or a Muslim or a Jew or a Hindu or a Buddhist or an adherent of some other religion or philosophy. These larger groupings and alignments still counted for something in human affairs, even in an age when the obsession with nationalism was threatening to swell into a monomania; and a survey of human feelings and opinions about the Italo-Abyssinian conflict would therefore be incomplete if these other—non-national or supra-national—outlooks were to be ignored.

In passing, at this point, from the national to the broader plane, we may begin by considering the attitude of the Holy See; for, since the conclusion of the Lateran Agreements of the 11th February, 1929, between Pope Pius XI and Signor Mussolini,<sup>1</sup> the Papacy had been restored to the full exercise of the dual rôle which it had played in the World before the 20th September, 1870. Since 1929 the Pope was once again not only the ecclesiastical primate of an oecumenical church but also the political sovereign of a parochial state; and although the infant state of the Vatican City differed from most of its contemporaries in being established upon a non-national basis, it was unavoidably implicated in international politics through the fact of being one among the local sovereignties into which the society of this age was divided.

Moreover the Vatican city-state was peculiarly at the mercy of its sole territorial neighbour the Kingdom of Italy, in whose national domain the Vatican City constituted a minute foreign enclave. Nor was this geographical *Einkreisung* the only special link which bound

<sup>1</sup> See the *Survey for 1929*, Part V, section (i).

the Holy See to the Italian national state. By a traditional custom which had been followed without a break since A.D. 1523, no member of the Catholic hierarchy who was not also an Italian in nationality was ever elected by the College of Cardinals to sit in the chair of Palestinian Peter; and in the Papal Court, from the College of Cardinals downwards, Italian nationals predominated, while Italian was *de facto*—though Latin might be *de jure*—the language of Papal intercourse and even administration. In consequence, the personal relations of a majority of Vatican citizens were with people who were citizens of the Kingdom of Italy; and, since human nature was not eliminated by vows of celibacy, these uniquely close relations between the citizens of the two states—relations that were blameless in themselves—were perhaps bound to be reflected to some extent in the Vatican Government's outlook and policy. When it is also borne in mind that all but an insignificant minority of the 41,176,671 inhabitants of Italy in 1935 were nominally, even if not whole-heartedly, members of the Catholic Church, and that this Italian membership was one of the most important contingents in the Catholic body ecclesiastic throughout the World, the strength of Signor Mussolini's hold upon the Vatican will be appreciated. A study of the attitude of the Holy See towards the Italo-Abyssinian dispute in these circumstances evokes, once again, a question which was raised by the signature and ratification of the Lateran Agreements:<sup>1</sup> In coming to terms with a Fascist Italy, had 'the Prisoner of the Vatican' really recovered his freedom, or had he perhaps paid for a release from his visible chains by submitting to a captivity which had become all the more onerous for being no longer avowed?

Some critics of the conduct of Pope Pius XI in this international crisis insinuated that the Vatican actually looked forward with a pleasurable anticipation to the prospect of an Italian conquest of Abyssinia, on the calculation that this *coup de force* might facilitate the propagation of Catholic Christianity among the Monophysite African Christians who would thus be brought under a Catholic European Christian nation's rule. This insinuation seems to have had no more solid a basis than an inference from the facts that Pope Pius XI took a special interest in the Catholic missionary work in Abyssinia<sup>2</sup> and that, in general, the Abyssinian Government and

<sup>1</sup> See the *Survey for 1929*, pp. 476-8.

<sup>2</sup> The Ethiopian College, which had been founded in 1930, was the only pontifical college that had its domicile within the frontiers of the Vatican city-state in 1935. The Pope gave a personal audience to the pupils of the Ethiopian College in July 1935.

people, for their part, had been unfavourable—and this on grounds of political caution, as well as on those of religious conservatism—to Catholic missionary propaganda in Abyssinia, ever since the Jesuits had been expelled from the country in A.D. 1633 for fear of their becoming involuntary, if not deliberate, agents of Portuguese imperialistic designs upon Abyssinia's political independence. If, in the light of this historical experience, the Vatican really had imagined in A.D. 1935 that an Italian military conquest of Abyssinia would promote the spread of Catholicism in East Africa, such a calculation would have betrayed a singular lack of ecclesiastical statesmanship; for it was manifest that Catholicism, as the national religion of Italy, would not stand to gain in popularity among a Monophysite Christian African population which had gone through the experience of being the victim of Italian military aggression. Indeed it could be prophesied that one of the lines that would be taken by the Amharan national resistance to an Italian domination would be a fanatical devotion to an ancestral form of Christianity which would be the last stronghold of Ethiopian national life if the Amharas were deprived of their immemorially old political independence by a successful Italian act of conquest. There was, however, no serious evidence that any such foolish and immoral calculations of ecclesiastical imperialism entered into the policy that was pursued by the Holy See in face of Signor Mussolini's war of aggression. So far from that, the Pope made it clear that he regarded the war in East Africa as a terrible evil which he deeply deplored and which, for his own part, he would have averted if he had believed this to lie within his power. His utterances, as well as his whole bearing, showed that the charge of sympathizing with Signor Mussolini's policy was an unfounded calumny; but, by the same token, the virtual impotence of the Papacy in this age to exert any effective moral influence upon the course of international affairs was demonstrated in 1935 as it had been demonstrated in 1914-18.

The Pope's first public reference to the impending Italo-Abyssinian conflict was uttered on the 28th July, 1935, on the occasion of the reading of a decree for the eventual beatification of the first Apostolic Delegate in Abyssinia, the Venerable Giustino de Jacobis.<sup>1</sup> In this context the Pope expressed a hope that 'nothing' would 'happen except in accordance with truth, justice and charity'. On the 28th August, at Castel Gandolfo, in addressing an international congress

<sup>1</sup> De Jacobis was an Italian missionary who had died in his mission field in 1860, more than twenty years before any Italian statesman had conceived aggressive political designs against Abyssinia's independence.

of Catholic hospital nurses, he mentioned the forebodings abroad of an imminent Italian war of conquest, and observed that 'a war which was only of conquest would evidently be an unjust war—something which is inexpressibly sad and horrible'. At the same time he mentioned the Italian contention that such a war would be just, because it would be for the defence of Italy's colonial frontiers and for the expansion of a growing Italian population; and on those points he declared that 'if the need of expansion is a fact of which account must be taken, the right of defence has certain limits which must be observed if this defence is not to become guilty'. Again, on the 8th September, in addressing, in the Basilica of St. Paul, a pilgrimage of ex-service men from sixteen different countries, he again expressed his hope for peace, and at the same time his desire that—'with justice and with peace'—the hopes, the needs and the aims of 'a great and good people, who' were his 'own people', might be recognized, satisfied and assured. As late as the 26th September, in broadcasting a message to the American National Eucharistic Congress at Cleveland, Ohio, he made a last public appeal for peace in stronger terms than those which he had employed before.

These declarations leave no doubt that the Pope abhorred Signor Mussolini's attempt to provide for Italy's national needs by making a cold-blooded war of aggression upon a weak and unoffending African people in breach of Italy's treaty engagements as well as in defiance of all moral and religious laws; and it may be presumed that in private the Pope impressed his view strongly and persistently upon the dictator of his native country. On the 2nd October—which was the eve of the day that had been chosen by Signor Mussolini for opening fire in Africa—the Vatican City remained dark and silent while, throughout Italy, the buildings were being illuminated and the church bells rung to inaugurate a public crime. But this aloofness was an expression of the neutrality of a sovereign independent prince, and not an expression of the moral censure of an ecclesiastical primate and a religious leader; for Benito Mussolini committed his enormous offence in the sight of God and Man without incurring any explicit public condemnation from the mouth of Achille Ratti.

The Pope's uneasy silence was defended by apologists on two main grounds. In the first place, it was suggested that his function was to lay down general principles of conduct without attempting to apply them to particular concrete cases. In the second place, it was suggested that he was bound to resign himself to the hard fact of his actual impotence; and that it ill became non-Catholics and non-Christians to upbraid him for a powerlessness which was largely due to their

own refusal to give him their allegiance. On the first of these points, it might perhaps be answered that the Catholic Church did prescribe quite precise and definite rules of practical conduct in many matters and that there was no religious or moral warrant for an abdication of ecclesiastical authority over the political portion of the field of human behaviour, since politics were no more exempt than anything else in the Universe from the cognizance of God. On the second point, it was perhaps pertinent to observe that the Italian nation and their Duce, who were the delinquents in this case, were officially neither non-Christians nor even heretics but, almost to a man, Catholics who at least nominally acknowledged the Pope's ecclesiastical authority over themselves. An historian would reflect that a Gregory VII—or even an Innocent IV!—would have staked his own personal fortunes, as well as the worldly interests of his lofty ecclesiastical office, on an attempt to bring the tyrant-criminal to book, and that the exile or imprisonment of the Pontiff would have been the first act in a trial of strength between the spiritual and the temporal power which would have ended inexorably, sooner or later, in the capitulation or the death of the twentieth-century Romagnol successor of the medieval Henrys and Fredericks.

The inaction of Pope Pius XI, which caused embarrassment and distress in many parts of the Catholic World outside the frontiers of Italy, was particularly painful to the Catholic community in Great Britain, and perhaps not least to Mgr. Hinsley, the recently appointed Archbishop of Westminster, who felt a close personal concern for the conversion of the African peoples to the Catholic Faith. In a public address delivered in London on the 13th October, 1935, Archbishop Hinsley drew a forceful picture of the enormity which the Italian aggressor was committing.

Indignation has no bounds when we see that Africa, that ill-used continent of practically unarmed people, is made the focus and playground of scientific slaughter. The educated African—the 'intelligence' of the native population, and nowadays there are many intelligent, cultured Africans—may well, and do, cry out: 'You Europeans, have you not done enough to enslave us, to use us for your own ambitions and for your own avaricious purposes? We are weak now and not capable of uniting, but the day will come when the Black races of our country and the Black descendants of our forebears whom you made slaves for your commercialism will become conscious of their numbers and their power.'

The same address, however, included an apology for the Pope which must have been as painful in the ears of many Catholics as it was unconvincing to the minds of many outsiders.

What can the Pope do to prevent this or any other war? He is a helpless old man with a small police force to guard himself, to guard the priceless treasures of the Vatican, and to protect his diminutive state, which ensures his due independence in the exercise of his universal right and duty to teach and to guide his followers of all races. Can he denounce a neighbouring Power—a Power armed with absolute control of everything and with every modern instrument of force? 'He could excommunicate' Yes, and thus make war with his dictator neighbour inevitable, besides upsetting the peace and the consciences of the great mass of Italians, with the result of a fierce anti-clerical outbreak. . .

It is easy to say *fiat justitia ruat coelum*. But no man, least of all the Pope, can contemplate the crashing of the heavens with equanimity. To speak plainly, the existing Fascist rule, in many respects unjust—it is one example of the present-day deification of Caesarism and of the tyranny which makes the individual a pawn on the chess-board of absolutism—I say that the Fascist rule prevents worse injustice, and if Fascism—which in principle I do not approve—goes under, nothing can save the country from chaos. God's cause goes under with it.

The unfortunate impression produced by this line of defence was increased by reports that the Vatican was in sympathy with the policy of Monsieur Laval, who did undoubtedly—and also indefensibly—subordinate justice to expediency in his handling of the Italo-Abyssinian affair. In the middle of October Monsieur Laval and the Papal Nuncio in Paris were reported to have conferred over the possibility of arranging a peace settlement at Abyssinia's expense that would have anticipated the terms of 'the Laval-Hoare Peace Plan' which was actually launched some two months later; and the miscarriage of the latter attempt to secure peace at the expense of justice was openly deplored in the columns of the Papal organ, the *Osservatore Romano*.

Meanwhile many prelates of the Catholic hierarchy within the frontiers of the Kingdom of Italy were publicly identifying themselves with Signor Mussolini's assault upon Abyssinia and defiance of the League of Nations. For example, on the 28th October Cardinal Schuster, the Cardinal-Archbishop of Milan, publicly called down 'peace and protection' upon the Italian armies which were opening 'the doors of Ethiopia to the Catholic Faith and the civilization of Rome'. The Archbishop of Siena, during divine service in his cathedral, invoked God's blessing for the same armies on the ground that they were 'fighting for civilization, for justice, and for the greatness of the fatherland against an odious and unjust coalition'. Similar pronouncements or gestures were made by the Archbishops of Catanzaro, Sorrento, Brindisi, Pisa, Messina, Matera, Taranto and Monreale; and by the Bishops of Teggiano, Sora, Civit  Castellana and San



Miniato. 'Sainthood and Italianity amount to the same thing', the Archbishop of Matera is reported to have declared in reopening for public worship a church in his diocese which was dedicated to St. Francis of Assisi. 'If you asked me', said the Bishop of Sora, 'whether one ought to support a war which has not been declared but which has been provoked by such a necessity as a people's right to expansion, I should not hesitate to give my answer in the affirmative.'

This open and unrestrained partisanship of many members of the Catholic hierarchy in Italy on behalf of a militantly aggressive Italian nationalism was to all appearance tacitly rebuked by the silence which was maintained by the Pope throughout the duration of hostilities in East Africa, and on the 5th May, 1936, when the church bells of Italy were ringing to celebrate the victorious termination of the Italian war of aggression against Abyssinia, as they had rung on the 2nd October, 1935, to announce its beginning, the bells of Saint Peter's were silent once again. The shock to the feelings of Catholics and non-Catholics beyond the bounds of Italy was all the greater when, on the 12th May, 1936, the Pope suddenly broke away from the Papal tradition of a superlatively prudent reserve in regard to secular politics—a tradition to which he had clung so painfully in the preceding autumn—in order to declare himself unequivocally on the side of a triumphantly aggressive Italian dictator on precisely those grounds on which Archbishop Hinsley had taken his unlucky stand in his apologia on the 13th October.<sup>1</sup> The occasion which the Pope chose for making this pronouncement—namely, the formal opening of a world exhibition of the Catholic Press—was as official as it was conspicuous. Pius XI was giving his blessing to the exhibition in the presence of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, of twenty-four Cardinals, and of many other dignitaries of the Church and of the Papal Court; and in that context and company he made the point that this ceremony in the Vatican City was almost exactly coincident in date with

the triumphal happiness of a great and good people in a peace which it hopes and confidently expects will be a prelude to that new European and world peace of which the exhibition seeks to be, and is, a clear symbol.

This pointed repetition of a phrase which he had used on the 8th September<sup>2</sup> cast a disconcerting light upon His Holiness' pronounce-

<sup>1</sup> In the light of the Pope's words on the 12th May, 1936, the historian may hazard the guess that this theme had been suggested to the Archbishop of Westminster, seven months back, by his correspondents at the Vatican headquarters of the Catholic Church.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 102, above.

ments on the eve of the commission of the Italian act of aggression, and in the minds of unsympathetic observers this echo might even implant a suspicion that, from first to last, the personal sympathies of the Milanese sovereign of the Vatican City—sympathies which had been dutifully repressed, without being strictly eradicated, by the moral judgment of the Holy Father of an oecumenical Catholic Church—had lain with the Romagnol head of the Italian state in his criminal enterprise for the sake of Italy's aggrandisement.

At a later stage of the proceedings on the same evening the Pope took up and developed, in outspoken and uncompromising language, Archbishop Hinsley's theme that any alternative was preferable to Communism, which was 'the first, greatest and most general peril'.

Herr Hitler's gratification at reading these words from so authoritative an ecclesiastical source must have been tempered by the strictures which were passed by the Pope upon the anti-clerical policy of National-Socialist Germany in the same breath with his denunciation of Bolshevik Russia. On the other hand, the whole of the Papal pronouncement of the 12th May must have been received with unqualified delight by Signor Mussolini.

It will be seen that one of the effects of Signor Mussolini's war of aggression in Africa was to call in question the historic relation between Italy and the Catholic Church; and, among the manifold consequences of the Romagnol dictator's international crime, this might prove in the end to be not the least momentous.

#### (j) THE REACTION OF THE COLOURED PEOPLES

The world-wide sympathy for the Abyssinians in their resistance to the Italian assault upon them arose out of a variety of feelings. There was a sympathy for the victim of aggression against the perpetrator; a sympathy for the weak against the strong; a sympathy for the Oriental against the Frank; and finally a sympathy for the Black Man against the White Man (in spite of the fact, which has been mentioned already near the beginning of this chapter,<sup>1</sup> that the Amharas themselves were actually the descendants of White invaders of Africa and that the strong infusion of native African strains into their Asiatic stock in the course of more than two thousand years had not deterred them from committing acts of oppression, and indeed of atrocity, against the pure-blooded Negroes who had fallen under their dominion).

In Western Christendom a flagrant breach of international law and

<sup>1</sup> See p. 9, above.

order, the immense disparity, in strength and resources, between the aggressor and his victim, and finally the ruthless use, by the Italian army, of devilish instruments of warfare which the Italian Government had pledged themselves to eschew, were the considerations that moved public feeling, rather than any corporate sense of common Christianity between the Catholics and Protestants of Europe and the Monophysites of Africa. In Western minds the recognition of Christian fellowship was inhibited in this case not so much by any sensitiveness to the theological differences between the Western and the Abyssinian version of the Christian faith, as by a consciousness of the diversity of race, and the difference in level of civilization, that divided the East African Christian from his co-religionists in Western Europe and in the New World. In fact, in Western eyes, the Amhara was primarily a Black Man and a 'Native', and only secondarily a Christian; and as far as the Westerner was aware of the existence of the Ethiopian Monophysite Church, he was inclined to dismiss this common Christianity, which he found himself sharing with these African primitives, as either an archaeological curiosity or a dubious joke. It was one of the ironies of the situation that the religious motive for sympathy with the Abyssinians appealed more powerfully to Muslim than to Western Christian hearts and minds.

In the Islamic, in contrast to the Western Christian, tradition Abyssinian Christendom played a prominent and an honourable part which was familiar to every Muslim who knew the story of the early trials of the Prophet and his first Meccan converts. At a moment when the persecution that was being inflicted upon them by the then all-powerful pagan vested interests in their native Mecca had become too grievous for them to bear, the disciples of Muhammad had been given asylum in Abyssinia by a Christian Government which sympathized with these Arabian refugees on the ground of a common monotheism;<sup>1</sup> and this gracious action, which was quickly forgotten by the Abyssinians themselves, made a lasting mark upon the literary record and the folk memory of the Islamic World. In Abyssinia's hour of peril and tribulation in A.D. 1935, this historic incident still availed to win Muslim sympathies for the Monophysite Christian victim of a Catholic Christian aggressor; and though this consideration may not have counted for much in certain Islamic countries like Turkey and Egypt, which by this date had become to a large extent Westernized and sophisticated,<sup>2</sup> it remained a living force among the

<sup>1</sup> This incident has been mentioned already in the *Survey for 1929*, p. 209.

<sup>2</sup> For a sketch of the Egyptian attitude towards the Italo-Abyssinian conflict, see the present chapter, pp. 96-9, above. The Turkish and Egyptian

more old-fashioned communities which at this date were still in a majority in the Islamic World. It weighed, for example, with the numerically and politically important Muslim community in British India; and this Indian Muslim sympathy with Abyssinia, like the Indian Muslim sympathy with Turkey between 1918 and 1923, was shared by the Hindus.

The Hindu sympathy with Abyssinia in 1935 was based on feelings of solidarity with fellow Oriental victims of Western imperialism and with a fellow coloured people which was being trampled under foot by representatives of the White Race. In Hindu minds this racial consideration was probably less prominent than the political. On the other hand, it was the governing consideration in the minds of the Negro sympathizers with Abyssinia on both the African and the American side of the Atlantic.

This sense of the solidarity of the Black Race through the World with the Abyssinian targets of a White nation's attack seems to have been given its first public expression in the United States, where at this time there was a larger and more highly cultivated Negro *intelligentsia* than in any other country. Public meetings of protest against Signor Mussolini's threat of war against the Empire of Ethiopia were held in Harlem, the Negro quarter of New York City, on the 14th July, 1935, and on the 24th. On the 28th of the same month a meeting of men and women of African descent was held, with the same object, in London; and a number of similar meetings in many West Indian islands, and also in British Guiana, were reported by the beginning of August. In a public speech delivered in England on the 3rd August, 1935, a member of the Government of the United Kingdom, Mr. Ormsby Gore, spoke of 'the danger of war between Italy and Abyssinia developing into . . . a war between Native Races and White Civilization, which would be a world disaster'. On the 11th August, in Jersey City, N.J., there was a fight between a Negro and an Italian mob. On the 18th and the 29th August there were two further meetings of protest in London—both organized by the International African Friends of Ethiopia. A protest meeting was also held on the 26th August at Kingston, in Jamaica, by Black British ex-service men who had seen their service in the (now disbanded) West India Regiment. And before the end of the month the triple

publics were moved partly by the considerations that were prevalent all over the Western World, and partly by their own special fears of becoming, in their turn, the targets of an aggressive Italian imperialism. Similar fears seem also to have been felt by the peoples of Arabia—and especially by the Hijāzīs and the Yamanīs—who still retained the old-fashioned Muslim outlook.

wave of interest and sympathy and resentment was reported to have begun to stir the Black population in Cuba and in Natal.

These reactions and forebodings were expressed with still greater vigour after Signor Mussolini's passage from menace to action on the 3rd October. In a letter published on the 5th October in *The Times*, Miss Margery Perham branded 'the seizure of Abyssinia as a crime' because, if Abyssinia 'were not unique in that continent, she would not be the last truly independent community there, and as such a symbol to Africans throughout the World'. On the 22nd October the correspondent of *The Times* in the West Indies reported a serious outbreak of disorder in the Island of St. Vincent, and he cited the local officials as his authority for stating 'that the Italian attack on Abyssinia had also served to inflame the natives, and' that 'for this reason fears were entertained lest the rioting should develop into a racial struggle'. This report from the Antilles evoked from Sir Hesketh Bell in London a letter which was published in the same newspaper on the 25th

While the rise of feelings of racial antagonism in the West Indies is unfortunate, the development of such an attitude among the teeming populations of our vast African territories would be a misfortune of the first magnitude. Save in the countries on the sea-board, the natives of our protectorates read no newspapers and are dependent on rumour and report for a knowledge of what is happening beyond their borders. In this case they know nothing about the circumstances that have brought about the conflict in Ethiopia. They only know that White men are killing Blacks by thousands in East Africa, not on account of any offence committed by them, but with the object of stealing their land. In the Courts of the great Nigerian Emirs, in the compounds of the native traders, in the village market places throughout Tropical Africa this story of unjust war and aggression is the subject of countless comments and conversations. Indignation, resentment, and distrust are seething in the minds of multitudes of unsophisticated natives, who, in the British territories at all events, have gradually been learning to trust in the justice and honour of the White Man.

The same point was made by the Archbishop of Canterbury in a speech delivered at a dinner of the Royal African Society on the 30th October.

Except in the most remote and least civilized areas, the native races of Africa had reached a stage of what might be called increasing self-consciousness: consciousness of what their place was, and of what they wished it to be, in their own country. It might not as yet be very articulate, and it had arisen not so much as the result of clear thinking as from long brooding. He was sure that that self-consciousness was being stirred at the present time by the unhappy events which were occurring in Abyssinia. The natives saw a great White race attacking,

with all the dreadful apparatus of modern warfare, the one remaining centre of independent African rule.

These authoritative general statements were quickly corroborated in detail.

In a letter written on the 17th December (*à propos* of 'the Laval-Hoare Peace Plan'), and published on the 19th, Miss Perham reported:

I have upon my table two letters, one from a West African, the other from an East African, both full of the war, both examples of the intense interest which educated Africans feel in its issue. Both put their trust in England.

'We all highly appreciate' (writes one) 'the action which the British Government has taken. It is the only nation on which the peace of the world depends, the saviour of the weak and the defender of justice. This war has proved that even France is not to be trusted. She is too much after her own interests.'

This issue is not only sentimental. The educated Africans of to-day will set the tone for the masses to-morrow.

And the tale was taken up by Bishop C. J. Ferguson-Davie in a letter published in *The Times* on the 21st December.

In your issue of to-day's date Miss Margery Perham writes of the effect which the war is having on the educated natives in Africa. For the past two years and a half my work has been at Fort Hare, the one native college for the whole of South Africa. I left there for a short holiday only 24 days ago.

The feeling is naturally very strong there on the subject of Italian action in Abyssinia, and of course the matter is being utilized by such newspapers as wish to produce ill-feeling among the coloured races towards the White races. But Miss Perham understates the position in suggesting that it is only educated or English-speaking Africans who are stirred in the matter. The ordinary natives also hear about the war. Just before I left, an educated native described to me the conversation he had heard between two middle-aged uneducated women about the war. Knowledge of what is happening is already widespread. It is not, as Miss Perham suggests, merely a question for the future.

At about the same date the writer of this *Survey* received from a friend of his on the staff of Achimota College at Accra, on the Gold Coast, a personal letter (dated the 3rd December, 1935, and thus written before 'the Laval-Hoare Plan' was published) which contained the following passage:

The Africans can think of almost nothing but Abyssinia. They are giving up trying to volunteer for service there, but large sums of money are being contributed. . . . One village that I know raised £4. In the absence of real news the native newspapers are filled with the wildest stories of Italian routs, and I should imagine that there are very few villages in West Africa in which the war and its causes are not known

and discussed. I am most thankful that the action of the League, and especially of Great Britain, has prevented the issue from being made a racial one.

Such were the feelings which had been aroused, before the end of the year 1935, in the hearts of coloured people all over the World, by Signor Mussolini's African 'war for civilization'. And this was before the aggressor had broken yet another of his international undertakings by resorting to the use of poison gas—and that against civilians as well as combatants.

The first impression made by this Italian conduct upon the mind of a British observer was an impression of wickedness rendered irresistible through being armed with the devilish devices of an unprecedentedly potent technique.

The second impression was that the observer and his own fellow countrymen were deeply implicated in what was being done by their Italian fellow citizens of the *ci-devant* commonwealth of Western Christendom. The bombing planes and the mustard gas with which the Italians were torturing the Abyssinians were a perverse application of a Western Physical Science which was a common achievement of the Galileos and Newtons and Voltas and Faradays and Marconis. In the misuse of this Western technique for the subjugation of backward peoples, the English had shown the Italians the way. The Italians had turned their arms against the last remaining independent native state in Africa because almost every other conquerable portion of that continent had already been acquired by the English or the French or the Dutch or the Belgians. And, after the Italian Government, acting on this pretext, had committed their breach of both the moral and the formal law by launching an unprovoked attack upon a fellow state member of the League of Nations, the British Government had resigned themselves to allowing the aggression to go on, when this monstrous evil could have been brought to a stop if the states members of the League had had the courage to fulfil in full their obligations under Article 16 of the Covenant.

The third impression made upon the mind of a British observer was that this common guilt of the Western World was probably on the eve of incurring its common—and proportionate—punishment. For bombs and poison gas were only irresistible so long as they were used against adversaries who were incompetent to retort in kind; and if the wielders of these weapons were one day to turn them against one another, the result of this internecine warfare would be their mutual destruction. In 1936 Signor Mussolini and Herr Hitler were calling loudly upon their fellow Europeans to march shoulder

to shoulder with them in campaigns for imposing Europe's will upon the rest of the World; but, perhaps fortunately for the World, there was little prospect at this date that Europe's aggressive impulses would be backed by the strength which would have been conferred on them by European unity. It seemed much more likely that the European peoples would revert to their ancient custom of turning their arms against each other, without being deterred by the penalty which another European fratricidal war would entail now that the weapons in the hands of *Homo Occidentalis* had become so potently lethal. If this prognostication hit the mark, then those European airmen who were torturing primitive Africans in 1935 and 1936 were practising for the day—perhaps in 1937 or in 1938—when they would have their fellow Europeans for their targets, while their own mothers and sisters and children would provide targets for other European airmen of the opposite faction (whatever lines the division of camps might follow).

The moral was drawn in a telegram from the Executive Secretary of the Ethiopian Red Cross, Mr. T. A. Lambie, which was published in *The Times* of the 25th March, 1936.

The bombing of country villages around Kworam and Waldia, the permanent blinding and maiming of hundreds of helpless women and children, as well as the infliction of similar injuries on soldiers with that most dreadful of all dreadful agencies, yperite, or so-called mustard gas, should cause us to ask ourselves the question—whither? Do we realize how dreadful an unscrupulous enemy can render war with this monstrous weapon, which surpasses in fearfulness the wildest dread of a disordered imagination? . . .

Whither? To-day a few thousand peasants in Wallo<sup>1</sup> will be groping their way down the dark years because of a dictator, whose name they have never heard of, but whose decree of ruthlessness has put out their eyes. Wallo is a long way from Charing Cross—yes, but not for acroplanes. Whither to-morrow?

Were European crimes in Africa to be avenged by European criminals in Europe? 'This dramatic eventuality must guide all our activity', declared Signor Mussolini in a public speech delivered in Rome on the 23rd March, 1936. 'The wheel of Destiny runs swiftly.' What further need have we of witnesses?

<sup>1</sup> It was one of the grim ironies of the Ethiopian tragedy that this Wallo Galla peasantry, whose first experience of the Italians' advent was a rain of corrosive poison, might otherwise have been inclined—more decidedly than any other Ethiopian population—to welcome the Italians as liberators. (For the unfriendliness, towards the Amharas, of these Galla populations who had installed themselves on the summit of the eastern escarpment of the Abyssinian Plateau, see p. 375, below.)—A. J. T.



## (iii) Relations between Abyssinia and Italy (1928-34)

In the indictment of Abyssinia which the Italian Government presented for the consideration of the Council of the League of Nations on the 4th September, 1935,<sup>1</sup> they declared roundly that the Ethiopian state was 'in such a condition of internal disorder and so politically, economically and culturally backward, that it' could not 'carry out unaided the thorough reorganization without which it must remain a permanent danger to the neighbouring Italian colonies'. They also declared that the inability of the Abyssinian Government to exercise their authority effectively throughout the whole of the 'colonies' which the Amharas had conquered from time to time meant that Abyssinia did not fulfil one of the essential conditions required by the Covenant of the League of Nations as qualifications for membership of the League. The Italians supported these statements by circumstantial details, relating not only to offences against Italian nationals and threats to the security of the Italian colonies, but also to the 'domination of the Negus over non-Abyssinian populations' and to the 'decimation of the subject peoples'; to the 'chronic state of internal disorder' in the country; to the persistence of the 'gebbar' system of serfdom, of the slave trade, and of the 'horrors of domestic slavery'; and to the 'barbarous customs and archaic laws' which were still in force. In corroboration of the evidence which they adduced, the Italian Government referred to the testimony of many non-Italian foreigners who had first-hand knowledge of conditions in Abyssinia.

Even if the picture painted by Italy were assumed to be substantially true to life (an assumption which was open to challenge),<sup>2</sup> it

<sup>1</sup> See p. 180 below. An English translation of the Italian memorandum will be found in *League of Nations Official Journal*, November 1935, pp. 1355-1418.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, the concluding paragraph of the 'Comments by Monsieur Marcel Griaule on some of the Questions dealt with in the Italian Government's Memorandum', which were transmitted by the Abyssinian Government to the Secretariat of the League on the 14th September, 1935, and printed in *League of Nations Official Journal*, November 1935, pp. 1588-94. Monsieur Griaule, who was the author of *Les Flambeurs d'Hommes* (Paris, 1934. Calmann-Lévy), one of the most up-to-date of the books which were cited by the Italian Government in support of their case, wrote as follows:

'It cannot, of course, be expected that the Italian Memorandum should be accurate on all points. The most eloquent and unbiased indictments normally contain some mistakes. It would have been human for the Italian Memorandum to contain, in view of its character as an indictment, a measure of inaccuracies that would not have detracted in any way from the value of the argument set forth.

'But in face of the number and gravity of the errors it contains; of the employment of certain witnesses whose honesty is not challenged but whose

would not necessarily follow that the public opinion of the World must accept as valid the Italian conclusion that the Abyssinian house could only be put in order by forcible intervention from outside. To those who were not concerned to make out a case for intervention, it appeared that it would be more in keeping with 'post-war' standards of international morality—and more likely, in the long run, to produce the desired results—if the Western Powers who were Abyssinia's neighbours were to lend their moral support and their practical aid to the country's ruling monarch, who made upon most of the unprejudiced observers who came into contact with him a striking impression of integrity, courage and political sagacity. Ras Tafari Makonnen, who became the Emperor Haile Selassie I<sup>1</sup> in 1930, was, by general admission, sincerely desirous of carrying through a comprehensive programme of reform; and during the short period of six years which intervened between his coronation as Negus in 1928 and the beginning of the active dispute with Italy at the end of 1934, he made sufficient progress with his Herculean task to justify the hope that the abuses which laid Abyssinia open to the charge of being a bad neighbour, and which made her membership of the League of Nations something of an anomaly, would gradually disappear under the influence of a

competence as observers of complicated facts is not proved; in face also of the absence of numerous witnesses of world-wide reputation who have taken up a contrary position; in view of the unduly large proportion of miscellaneous particulars which cannot be checked, and which, even if they were all proved, would not allow of any general conclusion; in view of the absence of any critical spirit, to which attention has been constantly drawn above, I declare that it would not be just to take the Italian Memorandum as a basis of discussion on the situation in Ethiopia, and that it would be unwise to draw from it any inference as to the need for foreign interference in the internal affairs of the country.'

Of the numerous first-hand accounts of the situation in Abyssinia which were considerably more favourable to the Abyssinians than the Italian memorandum, reference may be made to two addresses delivered at Chatham House on the 11th November, 1935, and the 30th January, 1936, respectively: the first by Dr. A. J. M. Melly on 'Ethiopia and the War from the Ethiopian Point of View', and the second by Mrs. D. A. Sandford on 'Ethiopia: Reforms from within versus Foreign Control'. These two addresses are printed in *International Affairs*, January–February 1936 and March–April 1936. Mrs. Sandford (who had lived for fifteen years in Abyssinia and whose husband, Colonel Sandford, had recently been appointed to advise the new Governor of the Province of Maji, one of the most backward parts of Abyssinia, which the Emperor hoped to transform into a model province) had formed the conclusion that the Abyssinians were 'a people who, strong in their national sentiment, progressive in their outlook, thanks to the remarkable man who is their ruler, physically vigorous and intellectually of a capacity distinctly superior to the average African native, might well be left to develop themselves and their country independently of foreign control'.

<sup>1</sup> 'Haile Selassie' in Ethiopic means 'Power of the Trinity'.

wise and far-seeing ruler, who had shown that he was ready and willing to accept foreign help on the sole condition that his authority over his own people should not be undermined.

The progress made during these six years might have been more spectacular if the Emperor had not been imbued with a native caution which taught him the wisdom of hastening slowly if he was to avoid the fate that had overtaken another Westernizing ruler of a backward country, King Amānu'llāh of Afghanistan,<sup>1</sup> just at the moment when Ras Tafari himself was taking his first steps along the path of reform. The essence of the problem which Haile Selassie had to solve was the substitution of a centralized administrative system for the old feudal régime under which each of the great 'Rases' was a law unto himself in his own territory and could defy the authority of the 'King of Kings' with impunity. So long as the Government at Addis Ababa was not in effective control of the whole country, it was obvious that any laws, such as those providing for the abolition of slavery, which ran counter to the traditional way of life of the local chieftains, were likely to remain a dead letter except in the immediate neighbourhood of the capital; and there was always the danger that the reactionary elements might co-operate in an attempt to overthrow a ruler who was endeavouring to impose unwelcome innovations upon them. By a combination of skill and good fortune, Haile Selassie was able to deal singly with three or four of the most formidable representatives of the old régime and thus to diminish the danger of a general revolt against his authority.

The first of the reactionary and malcontent chiefs to be disposed of was Dejazmach Balcha of Sidamo, who had been one of Menelik's lieutenants. He was ordered to come to the capital in the spring of 1928, and when he arrived with a large bodyguard and defied the Government he was surrounded by troops loyal to Rás Tafari and forced to surrender. A few months later there followed what was known as the Palace Revolt: a conspiracy against Ras Tafari by the Empress Zuaditu's household troops. This also was nipped in the bud, and the Empress then strengthened Ras Tafari's position still further by giving her consent to his coronation as Negus on the 7th October, 1928.<sup>2</sup>

The next trial of strength came in the early months of 1930, when Ras Gugsä Wolie—the former husband of the Empress, who was Governor of Gondar and Bagyemedet—led a revolt in the north. There were rumours that the other two great Rases of the north, Hailu of

<sup>1</sup> See the *Survey for 1930*, pp. 182-5.

<sup>2</sup> See the *Survey for 1929*, p. 228 n.

Gojam and Kassa of Amhara, were joining forces with Ras Gugsa, but in fact they seem to have remained neutral. Ras Gugsa was surrounded by Ras Tafari's forces and he lost his life in a battle which took place on the 31st March, 1930—in which an aeroplane, piloted by a French airman, played a part of some importance. Two days later, on the 2nd April, the Empress Zuaditu died, and Ras Tafari succeeded, without overt opposition, to the supremacy which he had already exercised in all but name.

On the 2nd November, 1930, the coronation of the Emperor Haile Selassie took place at Addis Ababa, in the presence of the provincial chiefs whom he had summoned to the capital on his succession to the throne, and of special missions from practically all the countries of Europe and from the United States. The scene was one of great magnificence, and if the foreign visitors were conscious that there was a good deal of 'window-dressing' in the attempts which were made to convince them that Abyssinia was a civilized country, it is probable that the concourse of dignitaries who had assembled from all quarters to do honour to the Emperor created the desired impression upon his own subjects.

Rather more than eighteen months after his coronation, the Emperor had to meet another severe crisis, when Lij Yasu—the grandson of Menelik who had been deposed from the throne in 1916 on his conversion to Islam—escaped from custody in May 1932 and made his way into Gojam. Lij Yasu had been placed in the charge of Ras Kassa, and held prisoner at Fiche, some sixty miles north of Addis Ababa; but Ras Kassa was detained in the capital, under the Emperor's eye, at the time of his prisoner's escape, and, whether from motives of policy or in deference to justice, he was not accused of connivance with Lij Yasu. Ras Hailu of Gojam, however, although he, too, appears to have been at Addis Ababa, was promptly arrested on a charge of complicity, put on trial and condemned to death. His sentence was commuted to banishment by the Emperor, but his property was confiscated (he was reputed to be the wealthiest man in Abyssinia). Lij Yasu himself was recaptured in July and spent the remainder of his days in prison.<sup>1</sup>

With the fall of Ras Hailu, the hereditary kingship of Gojam came to an end, but the authority of the Central Government was not established over the province without challenge. In the autumn of 1932 a revolt was organized by a son of Ras Hailu, and some months later another rebellion broke out in the western part of the province, but on both occasions the Emperor's forces had little

<sup>1</sup> He died at the end of November 1935.

difficulty in gaining the upper hand. In October 1934 there was a rising in the Northern Tigre, which was only suppressed after severe fighting.

In 1934 the Emperor succeeded in dealing with another reactionary survivor of Menelik's régime in the person of Fitaurari Birru. This chief had been gradually ousted from his offices, and he was finally exiled to the Arussi in July 1934. It was Haile Selassie's policy to replace the deposed chieftains by adherents of his own who had received a Western education and who could, he believed, be trusted to carry out his reforms. According to the Italian Government, however, these changes increased rather than diminished the disorder of the country. In their memorandum of the 4th September, 1935, they declared that

the elimination of important chiefs who wielded an extensive influence in certain regions, and the substitution of Shoan officials of the Central Government for the traditional chiefs, while failing to strengthen the Central Government's power in the frontier regions, have, at the same time, disorganized the provincial administrations and helped to make internal conditions in Ethiopia even more unstable than they were in the Emperor Menelik's time.<sup>1</sup>

The Italian Government also pointed out that the Emperor had been 'obliged to reverse his own policy completely' when he became the head of the state in 1930. Before his accession, he had 'endeavoured to weaken the power of the Crown in order the better to strengthen his own supremacy over the Empress. Consequently, he had . . . passed as the greatest feudatory of the Empire, who, in accordance with the traditional policy, sought to limit the powers of the sovereign'. After the Empress's death, Ras Tafari gained 'some apparent successes' in his new policy of strengthening the power of the Crown, but 'he did not succeed in re-establishing the sovereign power which he himself had been undermining for many years'. In the Italian view, this was 'the main cause of the present political disorder in Ethiopia, where the elimination of certain local Rases' had 'really been more in the nature of a personal victory for the Negus than of a genuine step towards the restoration of order in the Empire'.<sup>2</sup> Seeing that the Emperor had only been in supreme authority for five years when the Italian memorandum was compiled, this judgment on the effects of his policy of centralization might be dismissed as premature, even if no weight was attached to the allegations which were made on the Abyssinian side that for many years past the diffi-

<sup>1</sup> Italian memorandum, *League of Nations Official Journal*, November 1935, p. 1391.

<sup>2</sup> *Op cit.*, p. 1390.

culties of the Abyssinian Government had been greatly increased by the subversive activities of the Italian authorities.<sup>1</sup>

During the years 1930 to 1934 Haile Selassie made a beginning with the introduction of the reforms which were necessary in order to transform Abyssinia from a feudal kingdom into a modern state governed in accordance with constitutional principles. On the 16th July, 1931, the Emperor promulgated a constitution for the country. This established a consultative body of two chambers, the members of which were to be not elected but nominated—in the case of the upper house by the Emperor, in the case of the lower house by the local chiefs and provincial notables with the Emperor's consent. This Parliament, the first session of which was inaugurated by the Emperor in November 1931, on the first anniversary of his coronation, was empowered to discuss new legislation, but the final approval of all laws rested with the Emperor, and the Ministers who carried on the functions of government continued to be directly responsible to him.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'One glance at history is enough to reveal Italian intrigue at work within the Empire in the past, seeking to disintegrate it and to disorganize its administration' ('Preliminary Observations dated the 14th September, 1935, of the Ethiopian Delegation on the Italian Government's Memorandum', in *League of Nations Official Journal*, November 1935, pp. 1595-1601). Cf. Monsieur Marcel Griaule's 'Comments' on the Italian memorandum: 'It is a disturbing fact that the question of the disorganization of the public authorities in Ethiopia should be taken up by the very people who have been attempting to undermine them for close on half a century by fomenting rebellion in numerous districts' Monsieur Griaule went on to cite instances of Italian intrigues, dating from 1883 to 1907, and, 'from this by no means complete enumeration', he concluded that the Italian Government were 'scarcely in a position to raise the question of the disorganization of government in Ethiopia'.

For the Abyssinian accusation that the Italian Government made an improper use of the consular system, see p. 130 below.

The Italians, on their side, accused the Government at Addis Ababa of 'instigating subversive action directed solely against Italy and against her frontiers'. They alleged that a system of propaganda had been organized which made use of 'disloyal individuals . . . persons who' had 'been banished from Eritrea, deserters from the Eritrean militia, fugitives from justice, individuals discharged by the Italian colonial administration on account of inefficiency, insubordination, or dishonesty'. Such persons were 'attracted to Addis Ababa by the promise of work in order to form a special association (assisted by the Ethiopian Government) for carrying on subversive propaganda against Italy'. (Italian memorandum, *League of Nations Official Journal*, November 1935, p. 1388.)

<sup>2</sup> The Council of Ministers had been gradually acquiring greater importance for some years before the promulgation of the constitution. By 1935 the Foreign Office and the Ministries of Education, Commerce, Agriculture, &c., had developed into real Government Departments under responsible Ministers, and a permanent civil service was being built up from among the younger men who had been educated in the schools which had been established during recent years—some of them at the personal expense of the Emperor, who had interested himself in questions of education from the time of his appointment

In thus presenting his people with a constitution for which there was certainly no popular demand, the Emperor was laying himself open once more to the criticism that he was dressing his shop-window with an eye to the foreigner in the street; and it was obvious that, constitution or no constitution, the country would have to be governed for some time to come by the autocratic methods which were best suited to a state in Ethiopia's stage of development. From an educational point of view, however, the new consultative institutions might prove to be of definite practical value; for it appeared that the membership of the two houses was to be changed at frequent intervals, and in this way the Emperor might hope that, as time went on, an increasing number of his subjects would acquire some understanding of his aims and methods, and would be able to pass on their knowledge to a wider circle on their return from the capital to their own homes.

The creation of an enlightened public opinion was especially necessary if the reform to which most importance was attached in the outside world—the abolition of slavery—was to make any real progress. The charge that slavery and slave-raiding were continuing virtually unchecked was one of the principal items in the Italian indictment of Abyssinia, and the Government in Rome professed to have expected that this particular accusation—which was borne out to a considerable extent by independent testimony—would rally the nations of Europe to the support of Italy in her self-imposed crusade against a fellow Christian Power. Public opinion in other countries did indeed deplore the fact, to which the Italian Government gave fresh publicity, that slavery had not yet been abolished by a Christian state member of the League of Nations; but the widespread alienation of sympathy from Abyssinia on which the Italians apparently counted did not follow upon their revelations—partly because the slavery issue was felt to be a red herring, partly because there was general recognition of the extreme difficulty of putting an effective end to an institution which was closely interwoven into the social and economic fabric of Abyssinian life.

If it had only been a question of legislation, Haile Selassie would have had no problem to solve, for the abolition of slavery had been decreed as far back as the reign of the Emperor John and again by Menelik. In 1924, after Abyssinia's admission to membership of the League of Nations, a decree was issued which ordered that all the as Regent in 1917. The Church, which had been one of the great strongholds of Conservatism, was also beginning to tackle the problem of education in earnest, and an efficient school was started in association with the Cathedral of St. George at Addis Ababa (Mrs. Sandford, *loc. cit.*). In 1930 the Emperor had appointed an American expert to advise him on educational matters.

children of slaves should be born free and that slaves should be liberated on their master's death, and which prohibited trading in slaves. In 1931 this law was amended and the penalties for slave-trading were made more severe, but the persistence of raids for slaves across the frontiers into British, French and Italian territory<sup>1</sup> was sufficient proof that the law was not strictly enforced—at any rate in outlying parts of the Empire. Even in districts directly under the jurisdiction of the Central Government, where the indifference or active opposition of local chiefs had not to be reckoned with, the economic difficulty of providing a livelihood for liberated slaves put an effective brake upon rapid progress.

In the early months of 1932 Lord Noel-Buxton and Lord Polwarth visited Abyssinia on behalf of the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society and discussed the situation with the Emperor. Lord Noel-Buxton afterwards stated<sup>2</sup> that 'the Emperor did not see his way to adopt the suggestion', which was put to him on behalf of the Anti-Slavery Society, 'that he would be assisted in carrying out, in the teeth of strong internal opposition, the various reforms which he planned if he invited the aid of the League of Nations in regard both to finance and to the appointment of advisers'. Haile Selassie seems, however, to have accepted without demur the suggestions for dealing with the problem of slavery which were made by the Anti-Slavery Society, and, on being pressed to fix a time-limit for the work of abolition, he undertook that the task should be completed within twenty years. A special Slavery Department was set up before the end of 1932, with a British ex-official, Mr. de Halpert, as adviser, and 'the slave-trade, if not slavery itself, was seriously tackled in more than one province. The suppression of the conspiracy of Ras Hailu a few months later, increasing as it did the Emperor's authority, gave grounds for still further optimism. But at this stage the determination of many great Rases and of other conservative elements to oppose reforms appears to have got the upper hand. The efforts of the slavery officials sent by the Emperor to the provinces were neutralized by the opposition, active or passive, of the provincial governors, and, at

<sup>1</sup> See p. 41, footnote 3, above for a reference to the British White Papers on the subject. The Italian memorandum of the 4th September, 1935, gave lists of 15 'acts committed against Italian lives, property and interests', and 51 'raids, attacks and frontier incidents'; but while there were numerous cases of the carrying off of live stock, and also of the arrest and imprisonment of Italian subjects, in only one case (in May 1935) were the raiders actually accused of carrying off slaves. Details relating to the slave-trade in Abyssinia, reported by the Italian consuls in various stations, were included in another section of the report (*League of Nations Official Journal*, November 1935, pp. 1401-2).

<sup>2</sup> In a letter to *The Times*, published in the issue of the 24th July, 1935.



the centre, the work of the Slavery Department, which had begun so promisingly, was brought to a complete standstill by a quarrel between the Director and the Secretary of the Department, which led to the imprisonment of the latter. After fruitless endeavours to obtain action in the matter, Mr. de Halpert . . . felt compelled at the end of 1933 to resign his post'.<sup>1</sup>

Like many other reformers, Haile Selassie found that the wheels of progress revolved smoothly under his personal supervision, but that there was a marked slowing-down as soon as he turned his attention to another part of the vast field which he had to cover.<sup>2</sup> Lord Noel-Buxton was of opinion<sup>3</sup> that the disappointing result of the anti-slavery campaign was 'largely due to the action of Italy. The attention of the Emperor was diverted to other activities, and the funds essential for such reforms as the establishment of a paid police and judiciary were otherwise absorbed.'

From the end of 1934 onwards it was a matter of common knowledge that the Abyssinian Government were straining all their resources in order to purchase munitions in view of the military preparations which were going on in Eritrea and Somalia; but it was, of course, asserted on the Italian side that the accumulation of men and munitions on the borders of Abyssinia in 1935 was in answer to the preparations for an attack on the Italian colonies on which the Government at Addis Ababa had been engaged for some time past. The basis, such as it was, of this accusation was to be found in the fact that the Emperor's programme of reform included the organization on modern lines of the Imperial Guard, which formed the only standing force available to the Government at Addis Ababa for maintaining internal order and dealing with revolts in the provinces. Towards the end of 1929 arrangements were made with the Belgian Government for the despatch of a military mission to train the Imperial Guard, and the effects of the mission's work were already visible at the time of the Emperor's coronation in November 1930. A number of Swedish officers were also engaged to act as instructors of Abyssinian officers. Simultaneously with the reorganization of the Imperial Guard, the Emperor took steps to break down the system by which each of the local chiefs maintained his own private army—for instance by transferring the governors of provinces from one part of the

<sup>1</sup> Lord Noel-Buxton, *loc. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> According to Mrs. Sandford, a mass of routine work was done under the Emperor's personal supervision, and no decision, even in minor affairs, was ever taken without reference to him. (See Mrs. D. A. Sandford: 'Ethiopia: Reforms from within versus Foreign Control', in *International Affairs*, March-April 1936.)

<sup>3</sup> *Loc. cit.*

country to another and forbidding them to take their armies with them.

The acquisition of the up-to-date munitions which were required to place the Abyssinian army on a modern footing was governed principally by financial considerations, for the international restrictions on the importation of arms into Abyssinia did not impose any limits on the quantities which the Government might acquire for their own lawful purposes. At the time of her admission to membership of the League of Nations in 1923 Abyssinia had given an undertaking 'to conform to the principles set forth in the conventions relating to supervision of the traffic in arms and ammunition and the Protocol signed at St. Germain-en-Laye on the 10th September, 1919'. The St. Germain Convention,<sup>1</sup> which had been intended to forestall the danger that the stocks of small arms and ammunition left over at the end of the war of 1914-18 might find their way into the hands of the semi-barbarous inhabitants of Tropical Africa, had failed to receive the ratifications necessary to bring it into force, and a convention for the control of the arms traffic which was drawn up at a conference in Geneva in May 1925<sup>2</sup> suffered the same fate. In 1920, however, the Governments of Belgium, France, Great Britain, Italy and Japan had agreed among themselves to apply the provisions of the St. Germain Convention to the prohibited area specified in the convention, and since that area included Abyssinia and the parties to this arrangement included the limitrophe Powers, the importation of arms into Abyssinia should have been confined to supplies specially licensed and consigned to the Government at Addis Ababa. There was reason to believe, however, that the regulations were not observed by all the parties concerned, and in 1928 the British Government suggested to the Governments of France, Italy and Abyssinia that they should join with Great Britain in an agreement 'to anticipate the general coming into force of the Geneva Convention of 1925 and to apply its provisions to Abyssinia'.<sup>3</sup> The negotiations did not make rapid progress, and it was not until the 21st August, 1930, that a treaty 'regulating the importation into Ethiopia of arms, ammunition and implements of war' was signed in Paris.

According to the Italian Government's version, the necessity for an arrangement of this kind was recognized as 'specially urgent, because Ethiopia, under cover of the Italo-Ethiopian Treaty of 1928,

<sup>1</sup> See the *Survey for 1920-3*, Part V, section (i).

<sup>2</sup> See the *Survey for 1925*, Vol. ii, pp. 69-70.

<sup>3</sup> Sir Austen Chamberlain in the House of Commons at Westminster on the 4th April, 1928.

had initiated a policy of intensive armaments'.<sup>1</sup> Italy, France and Great Britain had also 'wished to give a further proof of their desire to assist what appeared to be the programme of the reigning Negus, by reserving to him alone the power to receive and control imports of arms'. In the preamble to the treaty,<sup>2</sup> the four signatory Powers declared themselves to be

desirous of ensuring an effective supervision over the trade in arms and munitions in Ethiopia and in the territories adjacent thereto, with the object on the one hand of enabling His Majesty the Emperor of Ethiopia to obtain all the arms and munitions necessary for the defence of his territories from external aggression and for the preservation of internal order therein and, on the other hand, of preventing the menace to the peace of Ethiopia and the adjacent territories of the other three Powers which is caused by the acquisition of arms and munitions by unauthorized persons.

Under the system of control which was devised, exports of arms from a manufacturing country to Abyssinia were only permitted on receipt of a 'writing or endorsement' in a specified form showing that the import of the consignment had been authorized by the Ethiopian authorities and that the articles were required for use by the Government or by public authorities responsible to the Government. The Governments of Great Britain, France and Italy were in a position to ensure that these regulations were observed by other arms-manufacturing countries by reason of their control over all the routes by which Abyssinia communicated with the outer world. They undertook 'to permit the transit to Ethiopia, across their respective territories adjacent thereto', of consignments of arms and ammunition which were accompanied by the Ethiopian Government's 'writing or endorsement' and by export licences or declarations supplied by the authorities of the exporting country.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Italian Government themselves, according to their own account (*Memorandum, League of Nations Official Journal*, November 1935, p. 1388), supplied Abyssinia, before the signature of the 1930 treaty, with small arms and ammunition to the value of 1,900,000 Italian lire. Of this sum 840,000 lire was still unpaid in August 1935.

<sup>2</sup> The text was published as the British White Papers *Cmd.* 2707 of 1930 and *Cmd.* 4051 of 1932. It will also be found in *Documents on International Affairs, 1930*, pp. 195-207. Ratifications were deposited at Addis Ababa on the 10th February, 1932.

<sup>3</sup> A reservation attached to this article (Art. 9) gave the Governments of France, Italy and Great Britain the right to refuse transit authorizations 'if the attitude or disturbed condition of Ethiopia constitutes a threat to peace or public order'. This was the only ground for such a refusal allowed by the treaty, and the French Government could hardly claim the benefit of the reservation when they refused, after Italy had been declared the aggressor, to allow munitions to be transported along the railway from Djibouti to Addis Ababa (see p. 350, footnote 2, below).

The Abyssinian Government, for their part, undertook not to sell or transfer the arms and ammunition which they received to unauthorized persons, to see that all firearms included in the categories covered by the treaty and supplied for their use were marked in a specified manner, and to publish quarterly returns of imports and exports of arms. By a declaration attached to the treaty they also promised to inform the other signatories of the treaty, on the 1st December of each year, of the sum which they proposed to devote to the purchase of armaments in the following year.

It was part of the Italian case against Abyssinia that these undertakings had not been observed. In their memorandum of the 4th September, 1935, the Italian Government recalled the fact that sales of cartridges to private persons had taken place on a large scale during 1931, and that the representatives of France, Great Britain and Italy had protested against these transactions on the 19th February, 1932, when they deposited the ratifications of the treaty of the 21st August, 1930.<sup>1</sup> Further instances of the illegal sale of cartridges were alleged to have occurred in 1933 and 1934. The Abyssinian Government were also accused of failing to stamp the firearms imported by them in the prescribed manner, and of omitting to publish regular returns and to notify the other Governments of the sums to be expended on armaments. Quarterly returns of exports and imports of arms were said to have been published from July 1933 to June 1934 but to have ceased thereafter, while no notification of proposed expenditure was made after the 7th December, 1932 (when the sum indicated amounted to 10,000,000 French francs for the year 1933).<sup>2</sup> The Italian Government alleged that 'in respect of the considerable quantities of arms' imported by the Abyssinian Government after the middle of 1934, there had been 'no communication either of the budgetary credits or of the statistics'.<sup>3</sup> This omission to publish the statistics required by the treaty would have been more serious if the Governments of the limitrophe Powers had not been in a position to check the imports into Abyssinia, and had not in fact undertaken themselves to publish details relating to the consignments of arms and munitions which passed through their respective territories. The Italian version was, however, that the Abyssinian

<sup>1</sup> The Abyssinian answer to this protest was that the cartridges in question were 'old cartridges filled with black powder, which could be used only for rifle practice'.

<sup>2</sup> The same sum had been allocated for 1931 and mentioned in the declaration attached to the treaty of the 21st August, 1930.

<sup>3</sup> Italian memorandum, *League of Nations Official Journal*, November 1935, p. 1411.

Government were successful in evading this control and that they were able to obtain contraband supplies of war material in enormous quantities.<sup>1</sup>

The Italian Government also complained that the Abyssinian Government had made an improper application of the arms treaty by denying the right of foreign consuls to import arms for the use of their guards<sup>2</sup> and by insisting that foreigners must obtain permits for the possession of arms when no such obligation was imposed on Ethiopian subjects. In general they declared that the Ethiopian Government had 'systematically violated the principal clauses' of the treaty of the 21st August, 1930, 'invoking its provisions only in order to prevent the import of arms intended for the consular guards or to stultify the régime recognized for foreigners under the Klobukowski Treaty'.<sup>3</sup>

The Klobukowski Treaty was a treaty concluded between Ethiopia and France on the 10th January, 1908. Its provisions, which had been extended to cover the relations between Ethiopia and other countries by the application of the most-favoured-nation clause, governed the treatment of citizens, subjects and protected persons of European states in Abyssinia. According to the Italian Government this treaty also had 'for some years past been systematically violated by the Addis Ababa Government'. The Abyssinian authorities were accused of preventing foreigners from acquiring land or obtaining long leases which would enable them to establish industries; of restricting the freedom of movement, even of members of the consular services; of granting a liquor monopoly to a Belgian company in 1922 and a salt monopoly to a Franco-Ethiopian company in 1930 and of according privileged treatment to goods from British Somaliland in 1933, in defiance of clauses providing for freedom of trade and most-favoured-nation treatment; and of imposing taxes and duties on foreign goods in excess of those permitted by the Klobukowski Treaty. On the 27th March, 1931, for instance, a decree was issued imposing heavy excise and consumption duties on imported goods,<sup>4</sup> and by the beginning of 1934 nine special duties in all had been introduced, despite

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 1388.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 130, below, for an explanation of the Abyssinian attitude on this matter.

<sup>3</sup> Italian Memorandum, *League of Nations Official Journal*, November 1935, p. 1412.

<sup>4</sup> The proceeds of these duties were used to purchase the assets and goodwill of the Bank of Abyssinia (a concern which had been founded in 1905, and which was controlled by a syndicate whose principal members were the National Bank of Egypt and French and Italian groups). The object of the Emperor was to establish a national bank and introduce a monetary system on a gold basis.

protests from the Diplomatic Corps. In April 1934 the Abyssinian Government issued a customs tariff replacing the system of *ad valorem* taxation<sup>1</sup> by a system of specific duties, and thus 'completely changed the system of taxation agreed upon with foreign states'.<sup>2</sup>

There were also complaints in regard to the administration of justice as it affected foreigners. On the basis of the provisions of the Klobukowski Treaty, disputes between Ethiopians and foreigners came before a Special Court consisting of an Ethiopian judge and the consul of the state to which the foreigner belonged. The procedure gave rise to considerable friction and many delays, with the result that the Ethiopian party was apt 'to obtain from the foreigner—who fears complications, delays and costs—a settlement out of court to his own advantage'. From time to time the Diplomatic Corps submitted proposals for the constitution of regular mixed courts, but no agreement had been reached in 1931, when the foreign Missions 'decided to refrain from taking part in the proceedings of the Special Court until the Ethiopians showed a serious intention of introducing the necessary reforms'. The abstention of the foreign Missions did not come to an end until May 1933, when the Ethiopian Government undertook that the numerous sentences of the Special Court which had been left in suspense should be executed within six months and that a mixed commission should be set up to compile a code of civil procedure. At the request of the Diplomatic Corps another commission was also set up to study the institution of mixed courts. Some progress was made in preparing drafts of a civil and penal code, which were approved by the foreign Governments concerned, but neither of the commissions had completed its task before the Abyssinian Government had to concentrate all their energies on meeting the Italian attack.<sup>3</sup>

These grievances were of a kind familiar to European officials in other countries, such as China,<sup>4</sup> where foreigners lived under a capitulatory régime; and, while they were no doubt vexatious enough, they could hardly be held to justify armed intervention by one, and one only, of the Powers whose interests were affected. The Italian Government maintained, however, that Italy was in fact the greatest sufferer from the internal situation in Abyssinia and from that country's breach of her treaty obligations. The arguments on which they based this claim were somewhat obscure to the non-Italian mind. They

<sup>1</sup> The Klobukowski Treaty provided for a duty of 8 per cent. on French wines and other drinks and 10 per cent. on all other French imports.

<sup>2</sup> Italian Memorandum, *League of Nations Official Journal*, November 1935, pp. 1361-4.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 1364-6.

<sup>4</sup> See the *Survey for 1926*, Part III A, section (iii).

declared, for instance, that Italy, 'owing to the geographical position of her colonies in relation to Ethiopia', was the Power which suffered 'the most serious damage, direct and indirect, from the chronic state of internal disorder in Ethiopia, and from the inability of that country to progress'.<sup>1</sup> They also asserted that the international agreements regarding Abyssinia to which Italy was a party<sup>2</sup> gave 'legal recognition' to her 'predominant interest' in that country, in accordance with her 'most urgent and recognized need of colonial expansion'.<sup>3</sup> The Italian Government were perhaps on rather firmer ground, morally if not legally, when they claimed that the conclusion of the Italo-Abyssinian treaty of 1928—the first treaty of friendship which an Abyssinian Government had ever signed with a European Power—gave Italy the right to expect specially favourable treatment in connexion with the economic development of the country. The most substantial of the Italian complaints against Abyssinia was that Italy had not obtained any of the advantages which she had expected to accrue from the 1928 treaty and that the Abyssinian Government had discriminated against Italian nationals instead of granting them special privileges.

The Italo-Abyssinian Treaty of Friendship and Arbitration of the 2nd August, 1928, had contained a clause by which the two Governments undertook 'to develop and promote trade' between their countries, and it had been accompanied by a supplementary convention which provided that Italy should grant Abyssinia a free zone in the port of Asab and that a motor-road should be constructed linking up Asab with Dessye, some 200 miles within the Abyssinian frontier.<sup>4</sup> At the time of the conclusion of these treaties, there seemed every prospect that Abyssinia was about to enter upon a phase of rapid economic development, and Italy hoped to derive great profit from the transit of the products of north-eastern Abyssinia through the port of Asab as well as from the participation of Italian nationals in the work of developing the natural resources of the country. These extravagant hopes would probably have been disappointed in any case as a result of the operation of the World Economic Crisis, which was extremely discouraging to the launching of projects for the exploitation of an undeveloped country;<sup>5</sup> but the Italian Government

<sup>1</sup> Italian Memorandum, *League of Nations Official Journal*, November 1935, p. 1391.

<sup>2</sup> See the *Survey for 1929*, Part III, section (ii).

<sup>3</sup> Italian Memorandum, *loc. cit.*

<sup>4</sup> See the *Survey for 1929*, pp. 229-30.

<sup>5</sup> The economic crisis was mainly responsible, for instance, for the postponement of the scheme for the construction of a barrage at the point where the Blue Nile issued from Lake Tana. In October 1930 a mission from the White

also found themselves obliged to contend with the passive refusal of the Abyssinian Government to implement the terms of the economic convention of the 2nd August, 1928. They took no steps to avail themselves of the offer of a free zone at Asab, and while the section of the motor-road from Asab to the frontier, for which the Italians were responsible, was constructed without undue delay, the continuation of the road to Dessye was never put in hand. In November 1931, over three years after the signature of the treaty, Italian experts attended a meeting at Addis Ababa to discuss plans for the road which had been drawn up by Dutch engineers in the service of the Abyssinian Government; but shortly afterwards it was announced that the newly constituted Parliament at Addis Ababa had decided that the construction of roads radiating from the capital must have precedence over all others, and on this pretext the project for a road from Dessye to the Eritrean frontier was shelved indefinitely. The Abyssinian Government also refused to consider another proposal, which had been put forward by an Italian company, for the construction of a road from the Eritrean frontier to Gondar.<sup>1</sup>

The motives which led the Abyssinian Government to sign the conventions of the 2nd August, 1928, and thereafter to adopt an obstructive policy which nullified their effect, remained something of a mystery. Xenophobia as such did not appear to be strongly marked in Abyssinia,<sup>2</sup> and although Ethiopians in general had a well-founded mistrust of foreigners and their machinations, that did not prevent the Emperor from engaging a number of foreign advisers to assist him in carrying out his reforms. Between 1928 and 1935, an Englishman was appointed to advise on internal administration, a Swiss on judicial questions, Americans on educational and financial questions,<sup>3</sup>

Engineering Company of New York visited the lake and made a survey, and an agreement was on the point of being concluded in 1931, on the basis of the mission's report, when the fall in the price of cotton obliged the promoters of the scheme to abandon it, at any rate for the time being. (For the earlier history of the Tana Barrage project, see the *Survey for 1929*, pp. 218-21 and 230-2.)

<sup>1</sup> Italian Memorandum, *League of Nations Official Journal*, November 1935, p. 1360.

<sup>2</sup> In January 1932 the American Minister at Addis Ababa was attacked, after the car in which he was driving had injured a woman; and in the June of the same year a French railway employee was attacked at Dire Dawa; but these seem to have been isolated instances. In his comments on the Italian memorandum, Monsieur Marcel Griaule remarked that 'xenophobia, if we bear in mind the majority of the European elements settled in or passing through Abyssinia, may be regarded as a sign of an elementary instinct of self-preservation'.

<sup>3</sup> The American financial adviser, Mr. E. A. Colson, who was appointed in February 1930, became the Emperor's principal foreign adviser. He assisted in the diplomatic negotiations before and during the war and remained at



Belgians and Swedes on military questions, a Swede on questions of foreign policy, a Russian on public works, Germans on aviation, and Frenchmen on foreign policy, public works, aviation, archaeology and postal administration. During this period only one Italian expert—an electrical engineer—was appointed in an advisory capacity.

The Italians claimed that Italy had 'not missed any opportunity of offering Ethiopia the advantages of her experience in solving the numerous problems which the country must tackle in order to advance along the path of civilization and progress'; and they declared that Abyssinia had 'replied by closing every door to Italian co-operation, and systematically obstructing every request made by the Italian Government'. Thus Italy had 'in practice found herself in a position of inferiority compared with other Powers, whereas the treaties in force promised her a predominant position'.<sup>1</sup> In addition to the obstruction of projects for roads and to the omission of Italians from the Emperor's corps of foreign advisers, the Italian Government gave several examples of discrimination against Italians and of obstacles which had been placed in the way of Italian enterprise. With regard to public works, for instance, the Abyssinian Government were said to have engaged Dutch experts and entered into negotiations with Swiss, French and American companies, but to have refused the assistance of Italian firms which possessed organizations ready to hand in the neighbouring colonies. The Italian Government complained that the Marconi station had indeed been constructed by an Italian company (whose tender had been the lowest), but that it had been placed, on completion, in the hands of French and Swedish technicians. They also complained that the services of Italian doctors and of medical officers who had established dispensaries at Italian consulates had been passed over—the direction of the Government's hospitals at Addis Ababa and Harrar being entrusted to two Frenchmen and a Swede—and that the work of a Serum and Vaccine Institute founded at Addis Ababa on Italian initiative had been obstructed. Another Italian enterprise, the Dallol potash mines, had met with perpetual

Addis Ababa until the campaign was nearly at an end, when his health obliged him to leave the country. Another American subject, Mr. J. H. Spencer, was appointed as assistant political adviser in January 1936. Mr. Colson and Mr. Spencer, together with Monsieur Auberson, the Swiss legal adviser, accompanied the Emperor to Geneva for the meeting of the League Assembly at the end of June 1936 (see pp. 493 *seqq.*, below) and Mr. Colson was also a member of the Abyssinian delegation to the Assembly in September 1936 (see p. 522, below). The Swedish military adviser, General Virgin, had resigned, for reasons of health, just before the war began.

<sup>1</sup> Italian Memorandum, *League of Nations Official Journal*, November 1935, p. 1360.

difficulties and had been refused permission to build roads from the mines to the Eritrean frontier, across which their products must pass. Finally, the Government's prohibition of the acquisition of land by foreigners made it impossible for Italians to participate in the agricultural development of the country.<sup>1</sup>

In the light of after-events, the Abyssinian Government's refusal of facilities for the construction of roads from the Eritrean frontier to the interior of the country appears to have been a wise measure of self-defence,<sup>2</sup> and the most probable explanation of their general policy in rejecting Italian co-operation would seem to be that they believed, rightly or wrongly, that Italian economic penetration was intended to be, not an end in itself, but merely a method of preparing for the military conquest of the country. Presumably they came to this conclusion shortly after the signature of the treaties of the 2nd August, 1928, before the Italians had been able to profit to any considerable extent from the provisions of those treaties. In this connexion it may be noted that the Abyssinian Government, in their 'preliminary observations' on the Italian Government's memorandum, made counter-charges of a serious kind against the Italian consuls.

Ethiopia . . . cannot . . . allow herself to be reproached for alleged infringement of consular immunities without in her turn complaining that Italy has, for military purposes, and through the establishment of consulates in districts which have no other importance than a strategical one for the penetration and invasion of Ethiopia, made an utterly abusive use of an institution which, as shown in the history of international law, was only accorded its privileges and immunities for purposes of peaceful penetration and expansion of trade.

At places where there is not a single Italian national, a consul establishes himself in an area known as consular territory with a guard of about ninety men, for whom he claims jurisdictional immunity. This is an obvious abuse of consular privileges.

The abuse is all the greater in that the consul's duties, apart from the supplying of information of a military character, take the form of assembling stocks of arms, which constitute a threat to the peace of the country, whether from the internal or the international point of view.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Italian Memorandum, *League of Nations Official Journal*, November 1935, pp. 1360-1.

<sup>2</sup> The Emperor Haile Selassie's attitude in regard to roads running from the frontiers was in accordance with traditional Abyssinian policy. When General Gordon visited Abyssinia in 1879, for instance, he recorded that his party arrived at Debra Tabor on the 27th October, 'having been taken over the worst road in the country (according to the King's own words). . . . Ras Aloula had sent me by this road across all the right bank tributaries of the River Tacazzi, on purpose to prevent my seeing a good road.' (*Colonel Gordon in Central Africa*, edited by G. B. Hill, 2nd edition, London, 1884, Thos. de la Rue and Co., p. 410.)

<sup>3</sup> *League of Nations Official Journal*, November 1935, p. 1601.

It was significant that the Italian Government, in the chapter of their memorandum of the 4th September, 1935, which dealt with 'acts against the security of the Italian colonies and against the Italians in Ethiopia',<sup>1</sup> should have recorded twenty-four instances of 'affronts to Italian diplomatic and consular representatives' between May 1928 and August 1935, and that in many of the cases the act complained of consisted in the arrest or robbery of couriers carrying mail-bags.<sup>2</sup> Such incidents were of frequent occurrence during the eight months of 1935 which were covered by the report, when the Abyssinians had special reason to fear that the information conveyed by the Italian consuls to the authorities across the frontier would be used to the detriment of Abyssinia. Among the more serious of the incidents affecting consular or diplomatic officials were an armed invasion of the Italian consulate at Harrar in May 1930, and an attack on the Italian consulate at Gondar in November 1934.<sup>3</sup> On both these occasions the Italian authorities demanded—and finally received—reparation which included a salute to the Italian flag.

The Italian indictment of Abyssinia on the score that she was a standing menace to the security of the Italian colonies included the accusation that the Ethiopian Government had attempted 'to commit acts of aggression against the Italian colonies while Italy was engaged in the Libyan and European wars'. These acts could not be placed to the discredit of the Emperor Haile Selassie (who was in fact holding prisoner his predecessor, Lij Yasu, who had been in power during the first years of the European War when the safety of Eritrea and Somalia had been threatened). It has been seen, however, that Italy was concerned to prove that the changes introduced by the reigning Emperor had increased rather than diminished the dangers to which Abyssinia's neighbours were exposed, and accordingly the Italian Government, in their lists of 'acts committed against Italian lives, property and interests', and of 'raids, attacks and frontier incidents', confined themselves to the period since Abyssinia's admission to the League in 1923, with special emphasis on the later years. Thus, out of fifteen cases cited of acts against Italian lives or property, four had taken place between 1924 and 1932, four in 1933, and the rest between January 1934 and August 1935. Similarly, out of fifty-one recorded cases of raids and frontier incidents, thirty-five had taken place since

<sup>1</sup> *Op cit.*, pp. 1367-88.

<sup>2</sup> Another significant incident took place in March 1933, when Abyssinian customs officials confiscated wireless apparatus found in the baggage of an official belonging to the Italian consulate at Gondar.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 136, below.

Ras Tafari's coronation as Emperor in 1930.<sup>1</sup> The raids reported were mostly for the purpose of plunder, but in September 1931 Ethiopian forces amounting to about 15,000 men, armed with ten machine guns, were said to have assembled in the Ogaden and adopted a threatening attitude, and there were also alleged cases of attacks on Italian posts prior to the Walwal incident. In May 1934, for instance, there was said to have been fourteen hours' fighting when Ethiopians attacked the Italian post at Barrei, and between March and August 1934 the Somaliland authorities reported that they were obliged to strengthen their defences in the Walwal-Wardair sector to meet threatened attacks from bands of Ethiopian irregular troops under the leadership of Omar Samantar, an exiled Italian subject who was accused of having murdered an Italian officer.

The Italian Government interpreted these incidents as 'armed attempts made by Ethiopian chiefs to establish a favourable *de facto* situation on the frontier'—the implication being that such attempts were made with the knowledge and consent, if not at the direct instigation, of the Government at Addis Ababa.<sup>2</sup> It was no excuse, in the Italian view, that large sectors of the frontiers between Abyssinia and the Italian colonies had never been delimited on the ground—though they had been defined on paper as far back as 1902 in respect of Eritrea and 1908 in respect of Somalia<sup>3</sup>—so that there were stretches

<sup>1</sup> Nine of the frontier incidents included in this total were reported to have taken place between the Walwal incident of the 5th December, 1934, and the end of May 1935, when the situation on the borders of the Italian colonies was abnormal. These incidents were dismissed as of little account by the international commission which investigated the Walwal incident—see p. 170, below.

<sup>2</sup> The Italians would presumably argue that if the local chiefs were acting independently of Addis Ababa, that merely strengthened their case against Abyssinia, since it was proof that the Central Government were not in effective control of the whole of the territories included in the Ethiopian Empire.

On the question of the authority of the Central Government over the 'colonies', Monsieur Marcel Griaule, in his comments on the Italian memorandum, pointed out that, even if the view was accepted that Ethiopia formed 'a nucleus of conquerors living in the midst of conquered tribes, who have been, to put it shortly, "colonized" by them, the international obligations concerning the exercise of effective authority over the border districts must surely be viewed with the same tolerance as is extended to European Powers in the discharge of the same duty on the borders of their unpacified or semi-pacified colonies'.

It may be noted in this connexion that the responsibility for raids across the frontiers of Abyssinia did not invariably rest upon the Abyssinians. The authorities in the adjoining European possessions also failed on occasion to prevent the inhabitants of regions which were nominally under their control from crossing the artificial border-line for unlawful purposes. This was an aspect of the nuisance which received little publicity in the European 'mother countries' of the territories concerned.

<sup>3</sup> See also p. 134, below.

of debatable ground in which frontier incidents might have been expected to occur even if there had been no real intention on the part of either Italy or Abyssinia to encroach on the other's preserves. The Italian Government accused the Abyssinian Government of deliberately adopting a 'dilatatory attitude' in regard to the delimitation of frontiers in order to further their designs upon Italian territory.

For some four years after the signature of the conventions of the 2nd August, 1928, Italy seems to have hoped that the difficulties which were being encountered in giving effect to the provisions for the development of trade with Abyssinia would gradually disappear, and the official attitude on both sides was that the relations between the two countries were normal and friendly. In the early months of 1932 the Emperor Haile Selassie's eldest son, who was then aged 16, was sent on a visit to Western Europe, and his itinerary included Rome as well as Paris and London. When King Victor Emmanuel visited Eritrea in September 1932, however, it was noticeable that an Italian journal devoted to colonial affairs, the *Azione Coloniale*, in commenting on the royal tour, pointed out that Italy was as well placed in respect of Abyssinia as France had been in respect of Tunisia and Morocco; and references in the Italian press to the need for a radical change in the relationship of Italy to Abyssinia became more frequent and more explicit with the passage of time. The anti-Italian influence which was supposed to be exercised over Abyssinia by France was the subject of bitter comment, as were the reports that Japan was obtaining economic advantages of which Italy was deprived.<sup>1</sup> The fact that Italo-Abyssinian relations had become seriously strained by the end of September 1934 was indicated by the issue of the joint Italo-Abyssinian *communiqué* of the 29th September, in which both Governments reaffirmed their intention of maintaining peaceful and friendly relations.<sup>2</sup> Little more than two months after this declaration an incident occurred which gave Italy a pretext for asserting that the time had come when she must impose a comprehensive settlement of all outstanding issues upon Abyssinia—if necessary, by force of arms.

#### (iv) The Walwal Incident and Attempts at Peaceful Settlement

##### (a) THE WALWAL INCIDENT OF THE 5TH DECEMBER, 1934

Walwal, the scene of the fighting between Italian and Abyssinian forces on the 5th December, 1934, was situated in a region—part sandy desert, part grazing-ground—in which scattered wells were by

<sup>1</sup> See p. 28, above.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 27-8, above.

custom open to the use of all the nomadic tribes which ranged over the country, irrespective of their allegiance. In this barren and inhospitable country, the boundary between Abyssinia and Italian Somaliland had never been demarcated on the ground. The frontier had indeed been fixed on paper by a treaty signed on the 16th May, 1908,<sup>1</sup> and demarcation by an Italo-Ethiopian Commission had begun in 1910. After about four months, however, when the Commission had marked out a small sector of the frontier in the neighbourhood of Dolo, its work had been suspended (according to the Italians, because of difficulties raised by the Abyssinian Government) and it had not since been resumed. The Abyssinians claimed that Walwal lay about sixty miles on the Abyssinian side of the frontier fixed by the 1908 treaty, and they supported their claim by reference to British and Italian official maps; but this contention was disputed by the Italians, who maintained that the correct interpretation of the treaty placed the wells on the Italian side of the frontier line.<sup>2</sup>

The area had been under Italian control since 1928, and had been permanently occupied since 1930. There was an Italian fortified post at Walwal, but this was subordinate to a larger post at Wardair, about eight miles to the south-east. The Italian occupation had 'not been officially recognized by the Ethiopian Government', but it 'never gave rise to any official protest from that Government until the Walwal incident'.<sup>3</sup> The occupation 'had given the Italian

<sup>1</sup> Text in Hertslet: *Map of Africa by Treaty* (3rd edition, London, 1909, H.M. Stationery Office), volume iii, pp. 1223-4.

<sup>2</sup> Article 4 of the treaty ran as follows:

'From the Webi Scebeli the frontier proceeds in a north-easterly direction, following the line accepted by the Italian Government in 1897; all the territory belonging to the tribes towards the coast shall remain dependent on Italy; all the territory of Ogaden and all that of the tribes towards the Ogaden shall remain dependent on Abyssinia.'

The line 'accepted by the Italian Government in 1897' ran 'at a distance of 180 miles parallel to the coast of the Indian Ocean', and the Abyssinian Government based their claim to the ownership of Walwal on the fact that the maps showed the wells to be situated at a distance of 240 miles from the coast (see the Abyssinian memorandum sent to the Secretary-General of the League on the 15th January, 1935, and printed on pp. 253-8 of the *League of Nations Official Journal*, February 1935). The Italian contention was that the territory in which the wells were situated formed part of the former Sultanate of Obbia and therefore belonged to Italy in virtue of the clause which provided that 'the territory belonging to the tribes towards the coast' should 'remain dependent on Italy'. This was the explanation given in the Italian press; but, since the Italian Government refused to allow the interpretation of the 1908 treaty to be the subject of arbitration, their claim to the possession of Walwal was not officially stated in detail.

<sup>3</sup> Decision of the Italo-Ethiopian Commission of Conciliation and Arbitration, dated the 3rd September, 1935 (*League of Nations Official Journal*, November 1935, pp. 1351-5).

authorities the conviction that the Walwal area was under Italian authority and was recognized by Ethiopia and the United Kingdom'; but, 'on the other hand, the Ethiopian authorities were convinced that the area formed part of their national territory. . . . Mutual suspicion and animosity had developed between the Italian and Ethiopian authorities. The Italian authorities became convinced that the Ethiopians had hostile intentions, and the Ethiopian authorities had the same conviction about the Italians.'<sup>1</sup> This 'atmosphere of suspicion and apprehension' formed the background to the incident of the 5th December, 1934.

On the 22nd November, 1934, a force of about 600 Abyssinians arrived at Walwal, which they found occupied by about 150 Italian native soldiers. The latter contested the Abyssinians' right to advance to the wells, but they were obliged by superior numbers to fall back, leaving the Abyssinians in possession of a small group of wells. The Abyssinian force formed the escort to an Anglo-Ethiopian Commission which had recently completed the demarcation of the frontier between Abyssinia and British Somaliland and which was now engaged in a survey of grazing-grounds in the Ogaden. This Commission, which was under the leadership, on the British side, of Lieut.-Colonel Clifford, arrived at Walwal on the 23rd November. The members of the Commission subsequently placed it on record<sup>2</sup> that they had been 'constantly thwarted' in their efforts 'to arrive at an equitable solution . . . by the unconciliatory and disobliging attitude of the Italian officer' in charge of the posts at Wardair and Walwal. On the 24th November, after a demonstration by two Italian aeroplanes which was considered to be provocative, Colonel Clifford decided to withdraw to Ado, about twenty miles from Walwal, 'in order not to complicate the situation for the Ethiopian authorities and to guard against any regrettable international incident',<sup>3</sup> and the British and Ethiopian members of the Commission withdrew from Walwal on the following day.

'For ten days after the Commission's departure, the Ethiopian and Italian troops remained in their positions facing each other at a distance which in places was no more than two metres, their loaded rifles in their hands, challenging, insulting and provoking each other.'<sup>4</sup> During this period both sides received reinforcements—the Abyssinians attaining a total strength of between 1,400 and 1,600 men and

<sup>1</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> In a report dated the 30th November, 1934, printed in *League of Nations Official Journal*, February 1935, pp. 263-6.

<sup>3</sup> Decision of the Italo-Ethiopian Commission of Conciliation and Arbitration.

<sup>4</sup> *Loc. cit.*

the Italian native troops about 500 men—but the Italian authorities took such precautions as were possible to prevent an incident.

On the afternoon of the 5th December general fighting began. Either side accused the other of firing the first shot, and the Arbitration and Conciliation Commission which subsequently inquired into the dispute<sup>1</sup> professed itself unable to decide where the responsibility lay. Two tanks and three aeroplanes were brought up from Wardair, and early on the 6th December the Abyssinians retreated in the direction of Ado, leaving behind them 130 dead and a large number of wounded. The losses among the Italian native troops were 30 dead and 100 wounded.

This incident did not differ greatly from previous clashes on the frontiers between Abyssinia and Eritrea or Italian Somaliland<sup>2</sup> except in the larger size of the forces engaged and in the higher number of casualties. As soon as the news of the affair reached the Italian Government, they instructed their *chargé d'affaires* in Addis Ababa to present a protest and demand apologies and compensation. The Italian demands, which were formulated in detail on the 11th December,<sup>3</sup> were that a formal apology should be made to the Italian commander at Walwal, and the Italian flag saluted; that a sum of 200,000 Maria Theresa thalers should be paid in compensation for the Italian losses and the damage to fortified posts; that the persons responsible for the attack should be punished; and that Omar Samantar<sup>4</sup> should be surrendered to the Italian authorities.

A few weeks earlier the Abyssinian Government had complied without demur with a similar Italian demand for a formal apology and reparation which had been made in connexion with an incident at Gondar, where the Italian consulate had been attacked on the night of the 4th November and one of the Askari guard had been killed and two wounded.<sup>5</sup> In regard to the Walwal incident, however, the Abyssinian Government were not prepared to take the blame. On the 6th December, before the news of the fighting reached Addis Ababa, the Abyssinian Government had registered a protest of their own<sup>6</sup>

against the occupation, by armed troops under the command of Italian officers, of various portions of Abyssinian territory, and, in particular, the places known as Walwal and Wardair in the Ogaden province, as

<sup>1</sup> See p. 170, below.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 131-2, above.

<sup>3</sup> Text of the note in *League of Nations Official Journal*, February 1935, p. 272-3.

<sup>4</sup> See p. 132, above.

<sup>5</sup> See also p. 131, above.

<sup>6</sup> Text of the note in *League of Nations Official Journal*, February 1935, p. 270.



well as against the obstacles which the said Italian forces have placed in the way of the survey of the Ogaden pasture-lands, in Abyssinian territory, by the Anglo-Abyssinian Mixed Commission.

On the 9th December, in reply to the Italian protest, they gave their own version<sup>1</sup> of the Walwal affair (according to which the Abyssinian forces had remained entirely on the defensive) and invoked Article 5 of the Italo-Ethiopian treaty of friendship of the 2nd August, 1928, by which the two Governments had agreed 'to submit to a procedure of conciliation and arbitration any question which' might 'arise between them and which it' had 'not been possible to settle by the usual diplomatic means, without having recourse to force of arms'.

The Italian reply to this proposal for arbitration was delivered on the 14th December.<sup>2</sup> In the Italian Government's opinion, the Walwal incident had 'occurred in circumstances so definite and clear that there' could 'be no doubt as to its nature'; they did not 'see how the settlement of an incident of that kind' could 'be submitted to arbitration procedure', and they therefore renewed their demands for reparation and apologies. Thereupon, the Abyssinian Government sent a telegram to Geneva,<sup>3</sup> in which they reported the fighting at Walwal on the 5th December, declared that Italian aeroplanes had since dropped bombs on Ado and Gerlogubi, and, 'in the presence of Italian aggression', drew 'the Council's attention to the gravity of the situation'. The Italian Government promptly followed suit by communicating their own version of the affair to the League Secretariat on the 16th December,<sup>4</sup> and during the next fortnight a series of notes and telegrams were interchanged between Addis Ababa and Rome or despatched to Geneva. In this correspondence,<sup>5</sup> more detailed accounts of the Walwal incident were given by both parties, and the Italians denied the Abyssinian accusations of subsequent acts of aggression and made counter-charges against the Abyssinians. The Italian Government continued to reject the Abyssinian proposal for arbitration and to insist upon the fulfilment of their demands—which would, they suggested, 'render possible the resumption of the work of delimitation of the frontier between Somaliland and Ethiopia'.<sup>6</sup> The Abyssinian Government, for their part, made a solemn declaration that they were prepared to satisfy the Italian demands if, as the result of arbitration, they were proved to be responsible for the

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 272.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 273-4.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 274.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 248-9.

<sup>5</sup> Texts in *op. cit.*, pp. 249-51; *League of Nations Official Journal*, June 1935, pp. 724-7.

<sup>6</sup> Italian note of the 28th December, 1934, to Ethiopia (*League of Nations Official Journal*, June 1935, pp. 726-7).

incident of the 5th December, but they refused to agree 'that the satisfaction demanded should be given prior to an inquiry establishing respective responsibilities'.<sup>1</sup>

(b) THE FIRST ABYSSINIAN APPEAL FOR THE INTERVENTION OF THE LEAGUE COUNCIL AND THE ITALO-ABYSSINIAN NEGOTIATIONS AT ADDIS ABABA (JANUARY-MARCH 1935)

Up to the end of December 1934 the Abyssinian Government had refrained from asking that the Council of the League of Nations should take any action in connexion with the dispute. They had, in fact, appeared to be relying upon the effects of the publicity which they were able to obtain by using the League of Nations channels—a method which had already served them well in the past.<sup>2</sup> The Italian Government's refusal to submit the dispute to arbitration, combined with the persisting tension in the Ogaden, convinced them that something more than mere publicity was needed, and on the 3rd January, 1935, they sent a telegram to Geneva in which they reported that Italian troops which were 'massed before Gerlogubi' had 'committed aggression there against the Ethiopian garrison on the 28th December', and asked 'in application of Article 11 of the Covenant that every measure effectually to safeguard peace be taken'.<sup>3</sup>

This communication arrived at Geneva on the very day on which the French Foreign Minister set out for the visit to Rome which culminated in the signature of the Franco-Italian agreements of the 7th January, 1935.<sup>4</sup> Whatever Signor Mussolini and Monsieur Laval may have said, or refrained from saying, to one another on the subject of Abyssinia, it was certain that Monsieur Laval arrived at Geneva for the opening of the eighty-fourth session of the League Council on the 11th January with a strong disinclination to take any step which might give offence to Italy. Acquiescence in the discussion of Abyssinia's request by the Council would have been a cause of offence, since the Italians were taking the line that the Council had no jurisdiction in the dispute (although they had appeared to recognize that the League had an interest in the case when they communicated their version of events in the Ogaden to Geneva in December). Monsieur Laval was therefore extremely anxious to keep the matter out of court, and he was assisted in his efforts to this end by the British delegate,

<sup>1</sup> Abyssinian telegram of the 31st December, 1934, to the Secretary-General of the League (*League of Nations Official Journal*, June 1935, p. 727).

<sup>2</sup> See the *Survey for 1929*, Part III, section (ii).

<sup>3</sup> *League of Nations Official Journal*, February 1935, p. 252; June 1935, pp. 727-8.

<sup>4</sup> See the *Survey for 1935*, vol. i, Part I, section (v).

Mr. Eden. As a result of their combined influence the Abyssinian representative, Monsieur Teclé Hawariate, the Abyssinian Minister in Paris, agreed to the omission of the Italo-Abyssinian dispute from the agenda which were adopted by the Council at its first meeting on the 11th January. During the next few days Monsieur Laval and Mr. Eden were actively engaged in negotiations with the Abyssinian and the Italian delegates with the object of reaching an agreement on a procedure for peaceful settlement which would obviate the necessity of action by the Council. Both parties were finally induced to agree that they should seek for a settlement of their differences by direct negotiations. On the 15th January Monsieur Teclé Hawariate handed in a memorandum<sup>1</sup> in which the Abyssinian case was set out in full, with the request that it should be brought to the Council's attention in accordance with paragraph 2 of Article 11 of the Covenant, and that the question should be placed on the agenda of the Council during its present session. On the 19th January, however, when the Council reached this item, which had been placed on its agenda two days earlier, the Secretary-General of the League was able to announce that he had that day received letters<sup>2</sup> from Baron Aloisi and Monsieur Teclé Hawariate announcing the readiness of their respective Governments to pursue direct negotiations.

Baron Aloisi's note declared that the Italian Government were prepared 'to seek in conjunction with the Abyssinian Government for a satisfactory solution of the question'—which they did not 'regard as likely to affect the peaceful relations between the two countries'—and expressed the opinion that 'the discussion of the Abyssinian request would not facilitate in any way the continuance of the direct negotiations with a view to an understanding'. He added that

the settlement of the incident might be advantageously pursued in accordance with Article 5 of the Treaty of 1928 between Italy and Abyssinia, it being understood that, in the interval, all expedient measures will be taken and all useful instructions will be confirmed or given for the avoidance of fresh incidents.

Monsieur Teclé Hawariate's note announced that

the Abyssinian Government, finding that the Italian Government, like itself, is desirous of conciliation and is prepared to pursue the settlement of the question which formed the subject of its request, in accordance with the spirit of the Treaty of Amity of the 2nd August, 1928, and with Article 5 of the said treaty, finding further that the Italian Government is prepared to take all expedient measures and to confirm or give all useful instructions for the avoidance of fresh incidents, agrees

<sup>1</sup> Text in *League of Nations Official Journal*, February 1935, pp. 253-74.

<sup>2</sup> Texts in *op. cit.*, pp. 162-3.

to the postponement of the discussion of its request to the next session of the Council. The Abyssinian Government, like the Italian Government, pledges itself to take all expedient measures and to confirm or give all useful instructions for the avoidance of fresh incidents.

The Council took note of these declarations and postponed its discussion of the Abyssinian request to its next session

At first sight, this agreement appeared to be the result of concessions by both sides. The Abyssinians had refrained from insisting that the Council must deal with the dispute; while the Italians now appeared to admit the Abyssinian thesis, which they had previously rejected, that the procedure of conciliation and arbitration for which the 1928 treaty provided was applicable to the dispute. The Italian Government's show of abandoning their original standpoint proved, however, to be illusory. Count Vinci, the Italian Minister in Abyssinia, returned to Addis Ababa at the beginning of February in order to conduct the negotiations with the Abyssinian Government, but his instructions precluded any yielding to the Abyssinian desire that the whole question of the frontier between Abyssinia and Italian Somaliland should be settled. In the Abyssinian view, responsibility for the Walwal incident depended upon the ownership of the district in which the wells were situated; if, as they maintained, the Italians were encroaching upon Abyssinian territory, the Abyssinians could not be accused of aggression even if they were proved to have fired the first shot. The Abyssinians therefore considered that the interpretation of the 1908 treaty defining the frontier was the first essential, and they were willing to submit this question to arbitration. The Italians, on the other hand, still maintained that the Walwal incident was a clear case of Abyssinian aggression, and they refused to consider questions relating to the definition of the frontier until the Abyssinian Government had made the reparation which Italy had demanded in December 1934. The Abyssinian Government refused to give away their whole case by meeting this demand, and the negotiations therefore soon reached a deadlock.

The conversations at Addis Ababa did, however, produce one useful result in the shape of a neutral zone between the Italian and Abyssinian forces in the Ogaden. At the end of January there had been further fighting, in which several men on both sides were killed and wounded,<sup>1</sup> and one of Count Vinci's first proposals on his return to Addis Ababa was for the creation of a neutral zone which would prevent future clashes.

<sup>1</sup> The Italians accused the Abyssinians of attacking an Italian post at Afdub, while the Abyssinians declared that the Italians had attacked their post at Gerlogubi.

By the third week of February agreement had been reached on the principle that representatives of the two parties should mark out a neutral zone, but there were still some practical difficulties to be overcome. The Abyssinian Government wished to include in their delegation one Belgian and one Swedish officer (members respectively of missions which had been engaged for some time past in helping to train the Abyssinian army),<sup>1</sup> but the presence of these foreign officers was unacceptable to Italy. This obstacle was removed by the action of the Belgian and Swedish Governments, who forbade their nationals to take part in the delimitation of the neutral zone, whereupon the Abyssinian Government appointed nationals of their own. Another difficulty arose over the question of permitting the tribes in the neighbourhood to have access to the wells in the neutral zone, but a satisfactory arrangement was finally devised. A *procès-verbal* fixing the conditions for the establishment of the zone was signed on the 13th March, and demarcation on the ground took place at the end of March. The zone was only six kilometres deep, and it extended roughly along the front of the positions held by the Italian forces in the quadrilateral Gerlogubi-Ado-Walwal-Afdub, leaving all the posts which had been occupied by the Italians in their possession.

Meanwhile, the Abyssinians had been finding increasing cause for anxiety in the accumulation of signs that Italy was contemplating the use of force on a large scale. The Abyssinians subsequently alleged<sup>2</sup> that Italian military preparations in East Africa had begun before September 1934, and the presence of the tanks and aeroplanes which were used at Walwal on the 5th December certainly appeared to be evidence of a 'forward policy'. After the signature of the Franco-Italian agreements of the 7th January, 1935, however, the Italian preparations assumed a more serious aspect. The outcome of the Laval-Mussolini conversations was regarded with some apprehension in Addis Ababa; for, even if the reports of an understanding which left Italy a free hand in Abyssinia were discounted, the Rome agreements, according to their published terms, gave Italy rights in the railway from Djibouti to Addis Ababa which she had not possessed hitherto, and this arrangement was not likely to commend itself to Abyssinian opinion in the existing circumstances. Three days after the signature of the Rome agreements, on the 10th January, came the announcement that General de Bono—an eminent Italian soldier who was also

<sup>1</sup> See p. 121, above.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, the telegram from the Emperor to the Secretary-General of the League dated the 20th May, 1935 (*League of Nations Official Journal*, June 1935, p. 721).

one of the heroes of the Fascist March on Rome of October 1922—had been appointed High Commissioner for Eritrea and Somaliland. Simultaneously with this appointment, the Abyssinian *chargé d'affaires* in Rome, Monsieur Jésus Afework, was received in audience by the King of Italy and by Signor Mussolini, both of whom gave him assurances that Italy's intentions were peaceful; but the effect of these assurances was counteracted by the comments of the Italian press—which accused Abyssinia of massing troops in preparation for an attack on the Italian colonies and which was already beginning to talk of the necessity for a thorough reorganization of Abyssinia by European hands<sup>1</sup>—and still more by the despatch of Italian military forces to East Africa.

Between the 5th and the 11th February the Italian Government called up the reserves which were required to place two divisions of infantry (the Peloritana and Gavinana divisions) on a war footing. By the middle of February some 70,000 Fascists were said to have volunteered for service in Eritrea or Somaliland; one battalion of Blackshirt militia left on the 10th February for the East African colonies, and two more embarked on the 18th February. The first detachments of regular troops left Italy on the 23rd February. On the 16th February the Fascist Grand Council passed a resolution approving the military measures which had already been taken or which might be necessary in future in order to guarantee the security and peace of the East African colonies, and the Supreme Defence Committee issued a statement about a week later declaring that the national resources were ready for a state of war.

This was the background against which the Italo-Abyssinian negotiations for a settlement were taking place in Addis Ababa. The Abyssinian Government held that the exchange of notes at Geneva on the 19th January, 1935, constituted an agreement to apply the procedure laid down in Article 5 of the Italo-Abyssinian Treaty of 1928, and during February they repeatedly suggested the constitution of a Commission of Conciliation and Arbitration. This suggestion elicited no reply from the Italian Government.<sup>2</sup> On the 8th March the Abyssinian Government pointed out that 'the diplomatic negotia-

<sup>1</sup> The Italian press did not fail to make the most of an incident which occurred on the borders of French Somaliland on the 18th January, 1935, when a party of Danakil crossed the frontier, massacred 88 Somalis in French territory, and killed a party of militia, led by a French official, which tried to cut off their retreat.

<sup>2</sup> The notes exchanged between Count Vinci and the Abyssinian Minister for Foreign Affairs in February and March are printed on pp. 731-45 of the *League of Nations Official Journal*, June 1935.

tions . . . concerning the question of responsibility' had 'shown the complete divergency of views' of the Abyssinian and Italian Governments 'and the impossibility of arriving at a solution by ordinary diplomatic methods'. They also drew attention to 'the despatch of troops and armaments to Eritrea and Somaliland', which, in their opinion, made 'the initiation of an arbitration procedure even more urgent'. The Italian Government replied on the 18th March that, according to their reading, the 1928 treaty provided for resort to the procedure of arbitration and conciliation only when ordinary diplomatic methods were exhausted, and that in their opinion direct negotiations by ordinary diplomatic methods could not be said to be exhausted. The Italians' refusal to agree to arbitration and their insistence upon continuing direct negotiations were regarded by the Abyssinians as a method of gaining time for the completion of their military preparations, and before the receipt of Count Vinci's note of the 18th March the Abyssinian Government had already decided to make another appeal to the League of Nations.

(c) THE SECOND ABYSSINIAN APPEAL TO THE COUNCIL, AND THE APPOINTMENT OF A COMMISSION OF CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION  
(MARCH-MAY 1935)

On the 16th March, 1935, the Abyssinian Government informed the Secretary-General of the League by telegram that they were about to submit a formal request for the examination by the Council of their dispute with Italy, and on the following day Monsieur Teclé Hawariate presented the request in due form.<sup>1</sup> The Abyssinian Government now appealed for the Council's intervention in accordance with Article 15 of the Covenant. They informed the Secretary-General that, 'in consequence of the mobilization ordered by the Royal Italian Government and of the continual despatch of troops and war material to the Italo-Ethiopian frontier', there now existed 'a dispute likely to lead to a rupture'. Italy's military preparations, they declared, constituted a threat to Abyssinian independence, and they appealed to the guarantee of the territorial integrity and political independence of the members of the League which was given in Article 10 of the Covenant. They asked that the dispute should be laid before the Council, for 'full investigation and consideration, as provided in Article 15, pending the arbitration contemplated by the Treaty of 1928 and the Geneva Agreement of the 19th January, 1935', and they gave a solemn undertaking 'to accept any arbitral award

<sup>1</sup> Text of his note in *League of Nations Official Journal*, May 1935, p. 572.

immediately and unreservedly, and to act in accordance with the counsels and decisions of the League of Nations'.

This Abyssinian note arrived at Geneva the day after the German Government had issued a proclamation announcing the reintroduction of conscription,<sup>1</sup> and, in the throes of the crisis which was created by this unilateral repudiation of treaty obligations, the French Government were more anxious than ever to refrain from any action which might weaken the newly forged bonds between France and Italy. As the Italo-Abyssinian dispute had developed, a good deal of sympathy with Italy's case had been revealed in France. Comment in the press recalled the fact that France, also, had found Abyssinia a bad neighbour, and there was a disposition to interpret the Italian military preparations in the charitable sense that Signor Mussolini was merely applying Marshal Lyautey's maxim: 'Montrer sa force pour ne pas avoir besoin de s'en servir'. Nevertheless, the French Government could not fail to feel uneasy in regard to Signor Mussolini's intentions, and their uneasiness was increased by the fear that the British Government, under the pressure of British public opinion, might desire to take a line which would not be in harmony with French policy.

At a later stage, when the British Government had to answer in Parliament to the charge of neglecting to act with sufficient energy at the beginning of the dispute, they were concerned to prove that they had, in fact, done all that lay in their power from the outset to promote a peaceful settlement.

Since the very moment when this controversy started [the British Foreign Secretary of the day, Sir Samuel Hoare, told the House of Commons at Westminster on the 22nd October, 1935] there has not been a week—there has scarcely been a day—when we have not made our position as clear as crystal to the Italian Government.<sup>2</sup>

From the beginning of this dispute [said Mr. Eden in the same place on the following day] His Majesty's Government had used all their influence, and used it without respite, to bring about a settlement which might be acceptable to both parties and consistent with the Covenant of the League of Nations.

<sup>1</sup> See the *Survey for 1935*, vol. i, pp. 141 *seqq.*

<sup>2</sup> On the same occasion, Sir Samuel Hoare told the House that on the 29th January, 1935, the Italian Government had communicated the substance of the Franco-Italian agreements of the 7th January, 1935, to the British Government and had 'intimated that they would be glad to exchange views with the United Kingdom concerning the mutual and harmonious development of British and Italian interests in Abyssinia'. It was in response to this invitation that the Maffey Committee was set up 'to review the whole field of Anglo-Abyssinian relations and British interests in that country'. See pp. 42-4, above, for the Italian disclosure of the contents of the Maffey Committee's report.



During January and February 1935 the British Government made repeated representations in both Rome and Addis Ababa, urging that the negotiations for a settlement should be pushed forward, and in February the British Ambassador in Rome, Sir Eric Drummond, warned Signor Mussolini himself 'of the possible reactions of Italian policy on British public opinion and on Anglo-Italian relations'.<sup>1</sup> The British Government, however, appeared to accept as satisfactory the assurances which they received that Italy's military measures were purely precautionary.<sup>2</sup> On the 13th February, for instance, Sir John Simon told the House of Commons that in the Government's opinion there were no indications that Italy's military preparations were aggressive in character, and that the partial mobilization of two Italian divisions did not imply the abandonment of direct negotiations between Italy and Abyssinia.

After the despatch of Italian troops to Africa had actually begun, British public opinion, which had at first been disposed to make allowances for Italy, began to show signs of a rapid diminution of sympathy with the Italian case; but for some weeks the policy of the British Government, like that of the French Government, continued to be determined by the belief that Italy's co-operation in the settlement of European affairs was of greater immediate importance than her intentions in East Africa. With these considerations in mind, neither France nor Great Britain was any readier in March than in January 1935 to accede to the Abyssinian request for a discussion of the dispute by the Council, and in London, as well as in Paris, there was a feeling of relief when it became known that the Italian Government had responded to the Abyssinian appeal under Article 15 of the Covenant in a manner which appeared to offer a way out of the dilemma.

In a note, dated the 22nd March, 1935, to the Secretary-General of the League, the Italian Government declared that the new Abyssinian appeal was 'based upon unfounded or incorrect premisses. It' was 'not true that Italy' had 'mobilized a class. The despatch of Italian troops to the East African colonies' was 'dictated by the clear necessity of providing for the safety of those colonies, which necessity' had 'been enhanced by the military measures taken on a very much larger scale by Ethiopia and by the abnormal situation still existing on the frontiers'. The Italian note went on to deny the contention that the Abyssinian Government had 'vainly

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Eden in the House of Commons on the 23rd October, 1935.

<sup>2</sup> Another assurance that Italy had no aggressive intentions was also given to Monsieur Jésus Afework by Signor Suvich in the middle of February.

demanding arbitration', but in its final paragraph it struck a more conciliatory note:

The Italian Government, although not considering, for its part, the phase of direct negotiations to be at an end . . . declares, nevertheless, that it has not, and has never had, any intention of evading the procedure laid down in Article 5 of the Treaty of 1928. In conformity with the provisions of this article, the Italian Government is, on its side, prepared, if the phase of direct negotiations closes without an agreement being reached, and if the Ethiopian Government does the same, to take steps forthwith with a view to the constitution of the commission provided for. In such circumstances, the Italian Government points out that, the dispute in question being one which the two Governments agreed by the exchange of notes of the 19th January last to submit to the procedure laid down in Article 5 of the Treaty of 1928, Article 15 of the Covenant cannot be applicable in this particular case.

The declaration that the Italian Government were now prepared to envisage the possibility of the settlement of the dispute by arbitration might be welcomed in Paris and in London, but in Addis Ababa it was received with greater reserve. On the 29th March, in a long note to the Secretary-General of the League,<sup>1</sup> the Ethiopian Government pointed out that the elaboration of the procedure for arbitration might be

the occasion of fresh delays in the pacific settlement of a very simple dispute. These delays must not be utilized for the continuation of military preparations and of despatches of troops and war munitions, as has been the case hitherto. Otherwise, once these preparations had been completed, nothing would be easier than to create incidents and, with the help of a press campaign, to find pretexts for an aggression. Ethiopia possesses no military force comparable with that of her powerful neighbour. She has no newspapers, no means of propaganda to influence public opinion and to present all the circumstances, whatever they may be, in a light favourable to herself. To defend her rights, her only remedy is appeal to the League of Nations. She cannot therefore renounce this last resort for protecting her independence and the integrity of her territory.

The Ethiopian Government suggested, therefore, that a time-limit of thirty days should be agreed upon for the Italo-Abyssinian negotiations on the appointment of arbitrators and on the details of arbitral procedure. If at the end of that time complete agreement had not been reached and the arbitrators were not ready to begin work, the Council of the League should be

invited itself to appoint arbitrators, to fix the procedure, to define the questions to be settled—and, in particular, the question of the Italo-Ethiopian frontier in accordance with existing treaties—and, lastly, as

<sup>1</sup> *League of Nations Official Journal*, May 1935, pp. 574-6.

a consequence, to instruct the arbitrators to pronounce on the responsibilities incurred on either side in connexion with the Walwal incident and others which have occurred in the frontier area.

The Ethiopian Government also suggested that

it should be expressly agreed that, during the whole period of negotiations and during the procedure of arbitration, the two Governments undertake not to make any military preparations or any concentration of troops, and not to take any step which might reasonably be regarded as a military preparation.

Five days later, on the 3rd April, the Ethiopian Government sent another communication to the League in which they referred to a report in the French press that Egyptian labourers had been engaged for the construction of roads between Massawa, in Eritrea, and the Abyssinian frontier. Considering that a measure of this kind was 'of a nature to aggravate the existing conflict', the Abyssinian Government asked that the Council of the League should look into the situation during its extraordinary session which was to take place in April to consider the question of Germany's breach of the disarmament chapter of the Versailles Treaty.

This request that the Council should deal with the dispute without further delay was made public just a week before the assembly of the conference which resulted in the establishment of the 'Stresa Front'.<sup>1</sup> The Governments of France and the United Kingdom, on the eve of the departure of their delegates for Stresa, were in no mood to put difficulties in their own way by supporting either of Abyssinia's latest proposals; while Signor Mussolini, for his part, was not averse from making a conciliatory gesture if he could do so without tying his hands. On the 10th April (the day on which Signor Mussolini met MM. Flandin and Laval at Stresa), the Secretary-General of the League received a communication from the Italian Government which made no mention of the Abyssinian proposal for a time-limit for the negotiations on arbitration or of the Abyssinian request that the Council should consider the dispute at once, but which announced that the Italian Government were notifying the Ethiopian Government that they were 'prepared to make the necessary arrangements with that Government regarding the details of the conduct of the procedure provided for in Article 5 of the Treaty of 1928'. The Italian Government also pointed out that by an Italo-Abyssinian exchange of notes of the 3rd-4th August, 1928, it had been agreed that, if and when Article 5 of the treaty should become applicable, two arbitrators should be appointed by Italy and two by Abyssinia,

<sup>1</sup> See the *Survey for 1935*, vol. i, Part I, section (vi) (e).

and if these four should be unable to settle the dispute by consent they should choose a fifth arbitrator, who would give a casting vote.

The Italo-Abyssinian dispute was not officially discussed at Stresa; and though it was subsequently admitted, on the British side,<sup>1</sup> that

<sup>1</sup> By Sir Samuel Hoare in the House of Commons at Westminster on the 22nd October, 1935. On the 1st May, 1935, Sir Samuel Hoare's predecessor, Sir John Simon, had replied to a parliamentary question with the statement that 'the Italo-Ethiopian dispute was never on the agenda of the Stresa Conference and the subject was not discussed there'. He added that 'informal conversations took place at Stresa between British and Italian officials on matters connected with the watering and grazing rights of nomadic British Somali tribes in certain zones outside the boundary of British Somaliland'. Sir Samuel Hoare himself had told the House on the 1st August that 'the question of Abyssinia was never discussed between the delegates of the three Governments at Stresa'. On the 22nd October, however, he said: 'It is not true that this subject [the Abyssinian question] was not mentioned [at Stresa]. It was not, indeed, formally discussed at the Conference itself—but it was discussed between members of the two delegations.' This statement was qualified by Mr. Eden on the following day. He repeated that the Italo-Abyssinian dispute had not been on the agenda of the Stresa Conference, and declared that, 'in the light of the fact that the conference had been called to deal solely with the complexities of the European situation, there was no reason whatever why it should have been'. He added that after agreement had been reached on the questions which were on the agenda, 'it was hardly to be supposed that one of the three Powers who had just declared that the object of their joint policy was the collective maintenance of peace within the framework of the League of Nations would take any action in any other continent which would jeopardize that framework'. The following interchange then took place between Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Eden.

Mr. Lloyd George: 'Does that mean that there was no discussion between our Prime Minister and our Foreign Secretary and Signor Mussolini?'

Mr. Eden: 'No official discussions at all.'

Mr. Lloyd George: 'Were there any discussions?'

Mr. Eden: 'Not between the heads of delegations.'

The British Government's failure to secure a thorough discussion of the Abyssinian question in all its aspects at Stresa was a point on which their critics felt them to be specially open to blame; and the Parliamentary Opposition returned to the attack in the spring of 1936, after the publication of a report that Signor Mussolini himself would have been prepared to discuss Italo-Abyssinian relations at Stresa. Towards the end of a debate on foreign affairs in the House of Commons on the 6th April, 1936, Mr. Greenwood, the Labour member for Wakefield, asked again for

'an answer to the question whether, in the light of the knowledge which Mr. Ramsay MacDonald and Sir John Simon had of the international situation when they went to the Stresa Conference and met Signor Mussolini, it was not a fact that they did not raise the Abyssinian question which was so troubling Europe. Signor Mussolini had said since—and if it had been wrongly reported the House ought to be informed . . . that he was prepared at the Stresa Conference to reopen the question of the rectification of Italy's position in Abyssinia.'

This question received no reply from Mr. Neville Chamberlain, who wound up the debate on behalf of the Government.

On the 6th May, when, after the departure of the Emperor of Abyssinia from Addis Ababa, the British Government were arraigned by the Opposition for

members of the British and Italian delegations had included the Abyssinian question in their private discussions, it was evident that the subject was only touched on incidentally, and was not examined in any detail. In view of the Abyssinian request of the 3rd April, it was not possible for the question to be passed over in silence when the extraordinary session of the Council opened at Geneva on the 15th April. The Council, however, while it included in its agenda one question (that of the settlement of the Assyrians from 'Irāq) which was extraneous to its main subject of discussion, decided that it was unnecessary for it to deal with the Italo-Abyssinian dispute until its next ordinary session in May.<sup>1</sup> This decision was based on the ground that both parties, in their communications to the Secretariat and in the declarations which their representatives made before the Council,<sup>2</sup> had announced their intention of resorting to procedure for peaceful settlement. It was in vain that Monsier Teclé Hawariate pleaded that Italy should at least be asked to give an assurance that no further military preparations would be undertaken pending the results of the arbitral procedure. Baron Aloisi succeeded in evading a direct answer on this point, and the other members of the Council accepted the view, which was expressed by Monsieur Laval, that Italy's undertaking to accept the procedure provided for in Article 5 of the 1928 treaty was a sufficient guarantee that she did not intend to have recourse to force.<sup>3</sup> A rather half-hearted attempt by Sir John Simon their share of the responsibility for the course which events had taken, their sin of omission at Stresa was included in the charge.

'It has been admitted [said Mr. Attlee] that they [the delegates to the Stresa Conference] never mentioned Abyssinia throughout the whole course of these discussions. That was one of the most criminal blunders in the whole course of British diplomacy in these disastrous years, because evidently Signor Mussolini was expecting that this subject would be raised. . . . Was Signor Mussolini to blame for having assumed that, if this opportunity for a straight talk about Abyssinia was let pass, that was as good as a hint that the British Government would not take too seriously a subsequent demand to do what he wanted to do in Abyssinia ?'

Mr. Eden, in his reply, dealt with this point by referring to the statement which he had made on the 23rd October, 1935.

<sup>1</sup> According to press reports, Signor Mussolini had announced at Stresa that he would not send a representative to attend the meeting of the Council if the dispute with Abyssinia were placed on the agenda.

<sup>2</sup> Monsiur Teclé Hawariate in his statement to the Council declared that his Government had 'made many proposals for prompt arbitration . . . both in notes addressed directly to the Italian Government and by successive representations made on two separate occasions, to two friendly Powers which had seats on the Council and which had agreed or even offered to lend their good offices. These efforts at a friendly arrangement had not proved successful'. The identity of the two Powers in question was not revealed.

<sup>3</sup> Article 5 bound the parties to adopt the procedure of conciliation and arbitration 'without having recourse to force of arms'. (See p. 137, above.)

to secure an agreement that the arbitrators should be appointed and their terms of reference fixed before the Council met for its ordinary session on the 20th May also failed to produce anything in the nature of a definite promise from the Italian representative. Thus Italy remained free, at any rate for another five weeks, to pursue her tactics of diplomatic delays accompanied by military preparations.

On the 14th April the Italian Government had duly notified the Abyssinian Government that they were prepared to make the necessary arrangements for the establishment of a Commission of Conciliation and Arbitration, but in their note<sup>1</sup> they declared that 'the precise point at issue' which had to be

settled by arbitration was the question of responsibility for the fight at Walwal on the 5th December and the subsequent incidents . . . while the determination of the Italo-Ethiopian frontier must be effected in accordance with the provisions of Article 5 of the Italo-Ethiopian treaty of 1908 . . . after the present dispute has been settled.

In replying to this communication on the 17th April the Abyssinian Government expressed the opinion that the Commission of Conciliation and Arbitration must deal with the 'two fundamental questions' which were involved in the dispute: first, the interpretation of the treaty of 1908, in order to determine the position of the frontier between Abyssinia and Somaliland and the ownership of Walwal and other places where incidents had occurred; and, second, the responsibility for the fighting on the 5th December and on subsequent occasions.

This exchange of notes made it clear that the two parties would have difficulty in agreeing upon the terms of reference for the Commission of Conciliation and Arbitration, and in the course of the negotiations which took place during the next few weeks difficulties arose not only over this question but also in connexion with the nomination of the arbitrators. It was not until the middle of May that the Italian Government nominated two Italian nationals to serve on the Commission, and they then refused to accept the Abyssinian nominees, Monsieur A. de Lapradelle, a Frenchman, and Mr. Pitman B. Potter, a citizen of the United States. The Abyssinian Government justified these nominations as a proof of their willingness to accept an impartial verdict, but the Italian Government insisted that the non-Italian members of the Commission must be Abyssinian nationals. The result was that, when the Council of the League assembled on the 20th May, the Commission of Conciliation and Arbitration was still not constituted.

<sup>1</sup> Text in *League of Nations Official Journal*, June 1935, p. 749.

Meanwhile, the Italians had been carrying on their military preparations with unabated vigour. On the 7th March General Graziani was appointed to the command of the forces in Somaliland, and three weeks later the appointment of General de Bono as Commander-in-Chief of all the Italian forces in East Africa was announced. The despatch of troops and supplies to East Africa continued steadily throughout March and April, and in the first week of May the mobilization of another division of regular troops and two Blackshirt divisions was ordered. By that time, also, two divisions of Askaris had been mobilized in Eritrea. As an accompaniment to these measures, the press was continuing to publish reports of frontier incidents and of the massing of Abyssinian troops, and the alleged insecurity of the Italian colonies was made the pretext for an anti-Abyssinian campaign of the most virulent kind. During the first fortnight of May a decidedly militant note was also to be heard in official utterances. On the 7th May, for instance, Signor Lessona, the Under-Secretary for the Colonies, told the Chamber that the Abyssinian Government were incapable of maintaining a minimum of order and tranquillity, and that the time had come when the Italian Government, for the safety of their colonies and for the sake of Italian prestige and dignity, must resolve once for all the problem of Italy's relations with Abyssinia. Similar references to barbaric conditions in Abyssinia which necessitated Italian intervention were made in reports on the Colonial Office and Foreign Office estimates which were submitted a day or two later to the Senate and the Chamber.

In the face of this provocation, the Lion of Judah was still roaring as gently as any sucking dove. From the beginning of the dispute, the Emperor Haile Selassie had declared repeatedly that he had no intention of launching an attack on the Italian colonies; but, as he told a press correspondent in the middle of March, his pacific spirit did not mean that he could be bullied into accepting the responsibility for the Walwal incident, or permitting Italian encroachments on Abyssinian territory without resistance. It became increasingly clear as time went on that if the Italian military preparations were intended to intimidate the Abyssinians they were failing to achieve their purpose. The Italian reports of Abyssinian mobilization were consistently denied in Addis Ababa, but considerable doubt was felt in European capitals as to the Emperor's ability to hold his wild tribesmen in check indefinitely. Reports of the movement of large numbers of armed, or partially armed, Abyssinians in the direction of the Italian frontiers were current in the early part of April; and there was reason to fear that, even if the Italian Government genuinely intended the

troops which they were sending to East Africa to remain on the defensive, the continual despatch of reinforcements to the borders of Abyssinia was more likely to cause a conflagration than to avert it.

On the 11th May the Abyssinian Government addressed another communication to the Secretary-General, informing him of the difficulties which were being encountered in the negotiations for the constitution of an Arbitration Commission and of the continuance of Italian military preparations, and appealing once more to the Council, under Article 15 of the Covenant, 'to see that the territorial integrity and political independence of Ethiopia' were 'respected and preserved as against aggression'. On the 20th May, the day on which the Council was due to meet for its eighty-sixth session, the Emperor himself telegraphed to Geneva the request that the Council 'should decide that unless Italy agrees that the arbitrators should interpret the treaty of the 16th May, 1908, and pronounce on all the incidents which' had 'occurred since the 23rd November last in the vicinity of the Somali-Ethiopian frontier, it' would 'take up the dispute itself and make a full enquiry and examination on the basis of Article 15 of the Covenant'.

Meanwhile, the French and British Governments had been taking counsel together in order to see whether they could check the ominous march of events by their combined efforts. The immediate sequel to the diplomatic conversations which took place in Paris early in May was a speech by Signor Mussolini on the 14th which dispelled any hope that the combined influence of France and Great Britain might prove more effective in Rome than the influence which the two Powers had exercised hitherto independently of one another. Signor Mussolini announced that the Italian Government intended to feel thoroughly safe in Africa; that they would despatch all the troops which they considered necessary for their purpose; and that no third Power could 'arrogate the intolerable claim to intervene'. Further diplomatic negotiations during the next few days did not bring a solution any nearer; and the French and British Governments found themselves once more face to face with the problem of deciding on a course of action at Geneva which could be squared with their obligations to a fellow member of the League as well as with their desire not to arraign Italy before the Council.

The motive of retaining Italy's friendship was still evidently uppermost in French minds, and it was felt in Paris that the probable consequences of letting Italy have her head would be less detrimental to French interests than the consequences of attempting to restrain her. The French delegation was therefore sent to attend the Council meeting at Geneva with instructions to do all that was possible to



promote a settlement by negotiation which would absolve the Council from the necessity of granting the Abyssinian request for a full discussion of the dispute. On the other hand, there were signs that the British Government were inclining towards the view that, while the resignation of a third Great Power from the League and the break-up of the Stresa Front were contingencies to be avoided if possible, the results of a failure on the part of the League to tackle Italy would be even more disastrous. On this view, the interests of the League and of the whole system of collective security demanded that Abyssinia should not be sent empty away from Geneva yet a third time, while hungry Italy was left to continue her preparations for taking her fill of Abyssinia's good things.

The Italo-Abyssinian dispute figured on the Council's agenda already, in virtue of the resolution of the 19th January, 1935; but, in deference to French views, it was decided that before the Council reached this item on its agenda an attempt should be made through the medium of informal negotiations to induce Italy and Abyssinia to agree to an arrangement for putting the arbitral procedure into force without further delay. In these negotiations the lead was taken by Mr. Eden, who was finally successful in extracting concessions from both sides and thus finding the basis for an agreement. The Abyssinian representatives—Monsieur Jèze (a Professor of Law at the University of Paris who had undertaken to act as agent for the Abyssinian Government) and Monsieur Tecle Hawariate—agreed to the postponement of the Council's discussion of the dispute and to the omission of any explicit reference to the question of interpreting the 1908 frontier treaty from the terms of reference of the Commission of Arbitration and Conciliation. Baron Aloisi agreed to waive the Italian objections to Abyssinia's nomination of a Frenchman and an American as her arbitrators, and he was also induced to agree that a definite time-limit should be fixed for the arbitral procedure. He refused, however, to accept any proposal that the Council should appoint a committee or a *rapporteur* to follow the course of events, and he did not commit his Government to acceptance of a suggestion that the Council should give an undertaking that it would handle the dispute itself if no agreement had been reached by the date on which the time-limit expired. Nevertheless he did not impose a veto on this suggestion, and accordingly a settlement on these lines was drawn up in the form of two resolutions.

The first resolution ran as follows:

(1) Whereas, at the meeting of the Council in January 1935, the Italian Government and the Ethiopian Government agreed to settle the

dispute which has arisen between them as the result of the incident at Walwal on the 5th December, 1934, in conformity with Article 5 of the Italo-Ethiopian Treaty of the 2nd August, 1928;

(2) Whereas, direct negotiations through diplomatic channels having been exhausted, the two parties have nominated their arbitrators as provided for in Article 5 of the above-mentioned Treaty;

(3) Whereas, since the 5th December, 1934, other incidents have taken place on the Italo-Ethiopian frontier and the two Governments are in agreement in entrusting the settlement of these incidents to the same arbitrators in accordance with Article 5 of the Italo-Ethiopian Treaty;

(4) Whereas the Italian Government, in view of the request which has been made to it, makes no objection regarding the nationality of the arbitrators nominated by the Ethiopian Government;

(5) Whereas the two Governments agree to fix the 25th August next as the date on which the procedure of conciliation and arbitration shall be concluded:

The Council,

Requests the Secretary-General of the League of Nations to communicate in the meantime to the Members of the Council all information which may reach him from the two parties, in particular regarding the development of the arbitrators' work.

By the second resolution, the Council, 'leaving to the two parties full liberty to settle the dispute in question in accordance with Article 5 of the Italo-Ethiopian Treaty of the 2nd August, 1928', recorded its decision

to meet if, in default of agreement between the four arbitrators for the settlement of the dispute, an understanding shall not have been reached by the 25th July between these arbitrators as to the selection of the fifth arbitrator (unless the four arbitrators agree to the extension of this period); the Council also decides to meet to examine the situation if on the 25th August the settlement by means of conciliation and arbitration should not have taken place.

The first resolution was adopted unanimously, and, while Baron Aloisi refrained from voting on the second resolution, his abstention did not prevent the attainment of technical unanimity on a resolution which asserted the Council's jurisdiction over the dispute.

During the discussion on these resolutions, Monsieur Jèze attempted to obtain from Baron Aloisi a statement that the Italian Government agreed with the Abyssinian Government's interpretation of the resolutions on certain important points. In particular, he wished him to agree that the arbitrators would 'be required to take into consideration all circumstances likely to affect the solution of the dispute', including 'the interpretation of treaties and agreements regarding the frontier'; and he also desired him to give an undertaking that 'throughout the whole arbitration procedure, including, if that should

be necessary, examination by the League Council', the Italian Government would 'abstain from sending to East Africa additional troops and munitions or additional specialists' and that they would not 'use, for the preparation of an attack on Ethiopia, the troops, munitions and specialists already sent to East Africa'. Baron Aloisi gave an evasive reply on both these points. On the question of the frontier agreements he said that his Government did not 'in any way intend to limit the mission entrusted to the arbitrators under the terms of the 1928 treaty', but that they could not 'in any circumstances agree to their extending their survey to frontier questions'.<sup>1</sup> In regard to Italy's military preparations, he declared 'that no authority would wish to interfere in the least degree with our Government's exercise of its sovereignty. By accepting the arbitration procedure, we have demonstrated our determination to respect the undertakings entered into by our two Governments'. This declaration, in conjunction with Baron Aloisi's acceptance of the first paragraph of the Council's first resolution, was taken as equivalent to a promise that Italy would not use her forces in East Africa to attack Abyssinia while arbitration was in progress. Baron Aloisi, however, carefully refrained from giving any undertaking in regard to the despatch of further reinforcements and supplies, and on the following day a Foreign Office spokesman in Rome announced that the agreement at Geneva would make no difference to the mobilization and transport of troops.

Thus, while the resolutions of the 25th May did mark a certain progress—sufficient, perhaps, to absolve the Council from the charge that it had been concerned merely to save its own face—they could not be regarded as in any sense a satisfactory settlement. The machinery for arbitration was now set in motion, and if it did not produce results within a given time the Council had bound itself to take action. It was also to the good that the Italian Government should not have refused definitely to accept the Council's jurisdiction; it was not certain that Italian representatives would come to Geneva if the dispute came up for discussion by the Council, but neither was it certain that they would stay away.

<sup>1</sup> Baron Aloisi repeated this statement in slightly different words when Monsieur Jèze pressed him to declare his acceptance of the thesis that, while demarcation on the spot would not be the business of the arbitrators, they would be free 'to take account of all the circumstances which have a bearing on its settlement' and that 'the interpretation of the treaties fixing the frontiers' was 'within their competence'. Baron Aloisi's reply was: 'Subject to the reservation I made, we do not intend in any way to restrict the work of the arbitrators, except with regard to frontier questions'. With this statement Monsieur Jèze declared himself satisfied.

On the other hand, no provision had been made for dealing in the near future with the wider questions at issue. It was now generally recognized that a settlement of the Walwal incident and of other frontier affrays would merely touch the fringe of the Italo-Abyssinian difficulty, and that even if the Abyssinian-Somalian frontier was defined by the arbitrators, as the Abyssinians desired, the real problem would still remain unsolved. The scope of Italy's preparations, the vast expenditure which had already been incurred,<sup>1</sup> the tone of Italian press comments and official statements, all made it difficult for even the most optimistic observers to believe that Signor Mussolini was not contemplating the fulfilment of Italy's colonial aspirations at Abyssinia's expense. Looked at from this angle, the agreement of the 25th May was open to the criticism that it left Italy free to go on with her preparations during the rainy season (when it would, in any case, be impossible to launch an attack upon Abyssinia) and gave Abyssinia no guarantee whatever that the attack would not come in the autumn as soon as the rains had ceased. The best that could be said was that the door was still open for further efforts on the part of Great Britain and France to achieve a comprehensive settlement through diplomatic channels.

(d) THE BREAK-DOWN OF THE COMMISSION OF CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION AND THE BRITISH PROPOSAL FOR AN EXCHANGE OF TERRITORIES (JUNE-JULY 1935)

The Italo-Abyssinian Commission of Conciliation and Arbitration, consisting of Count Aldrovandi Marescotti and Signor Montagna for Italy, and Mr. Potter and Monsieur de Lapradelle for Abyssinia, held a preliminary meeting at Milan on the 6th and 7th June and then adjourned for nearly three weeks in order to allow time for the collection of documents bearing on the cases of the two parties. The Commission met again on the 25th June at Scheveningen, near The Hague, and began its examination of the evidence. On the 5th July the hearings were interrupted, and on the 9th it was announced that the Commission had reached a deadlock and had decided to suspend its sittings indefinitely.

The cause of the break-down was a difference of opinion between the representatives of Italy and Abyssinia as to the Commission's terms of reference. The exchange of views between Monsieur Jèze and Baron Aloisi at the meeting of the League Council on the 25th May<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The cost of 'exigencies' in East Africa amounted to 620,000,000 lire (about £10,000,000) by the end of April 1935.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 154-5, above.

had not cleared up the question how far the Commission was to take into consideration the rival claims in regard to the position of the frontier between Abyssinia and Italian Somaliland, and the representatives of the two parties put different interpretations upon the Council's resolution and the subsequent declarations. The Abyssinians maintained that Baron Aloisi had accepted their view that the interpretation of the treaties relating to the frontier was within the Commission's competence, but the Italians denied that any such construction could be put upon Baron Aloisi's words and declared that they had only agreed to submit to arbitration the actual incidents which had taken place on the frontiers since the end of November 1934. The Abyssinian case which was presented to the Commission was based on the assumption that Walwal was in Abyssinian territory ; but when Monsieur Jèze made a statement to that effect in his exposition, the Italian members of the Commission declared that the question of the ownership of Walwal was not the point at issue and refused to hear Monsieur Jèze's evidence. When the Abyssinian representatives maintained their view that the consideration of frontier questions was in order, the Italian representatives refused to continue the discussions or to present their own evidence. The Abyssinian representatives then proposed that the Commission should proceed to elect a fifth arbitrator, in accordance with the provisions of the Italo-Abyssinian exchange of notes of August 1928, but this proposal was rejected by the Italians. They contended that the point at issue related to the competence of the Commission and that it could not be solved by the appointment of a fifth member, and they declared that they were willing to continue the work of the Commission within the limits which they held to have been fixed by the agreement of the 25th May. Separate reports were drawn up by the two sets of arbitrators on the causes of the break-down, and these were communicated to the Secretariat of the League on the 9th July by Monsieur Jèze, with the request that the Council's attention should be drawn to the urgent need for its intervention. The failure of the Commission to agree upon the appointment of a fifth arbitrator automatically brought into force the first part of the Council's second resolution of the 25th May,<sup>1</sup> and it was therefore clear that a meeting of the Council would have to be held on or shortly after the 25th July.

Meanwhile, the British Government had taken the initiative in an attempt to find a peaceful solution for the whole problem of Italo-Abyssinian relations. On the 7th June, Mr. Eden made a statement

<sup>1</sup> See p. 154 above.

on the Italo-Abyssinian dispute in the House of Commons at Westminster. The Lord Privy Seal told the House that it was 'the constant and persistent endeavour' of the British Government

to help to bring about a permanent settlement mutually satisfactory to Italy and Ethiopia, a settlement which would take account of [British] responsibilities and those of France and Italy in the Tripartite Treaty of 1906 by which [Great Britain], France and Italy agreed to co-operate in maintaining the political and territorial integrity of Abyssinia.

The 1906 treaty had also provided that the three signatories should take concerted action to safeguard their special interests in Abyssinia, including 'the interests of Italy in Ethiopia as regards Eritrea and Somaliland, . . . more especially with reference to the hinterland of her possessions and the territorial connexion between them to the west of Addis Ababa'.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Eden's reference to this treaty was an indication that the British Government, in attempting to find a basis for a satisfactory settlement of the Italo-Abyssinian dispute, took account of the fact that Italy's interests in Abyssinia (though not her exclusive interests) had been recognized in various international instruments of which Great Britain was herself a signatory.<sup>2</sup> For some time past, the British and French Governments were believed to have been using their influence at Addis Ababa in order to induce the Emperor to offer concessions of a kind which might meet a genuine Italian need for expansion. It was denied that there had been anything in the nature of pressure upon Abyssinia to buy Italy off, but there was little doubt that the Emperor had been invited to weigh the sacrifices which might be the price of a peaceful settlement against the horrors of a war in which all the advantages of modern armaments would be on Italy's side. By June 1935 the British Government had ascertained that a settlement involving the cession of territory to Italy would be favourably considered by Abyssinia if she were to be offered suitable compensation, and that the most acceptable compensation would take the form of an outlet on the sea under Abyssinian sovereignty.<sup>3</sup> Such an outlet might be provided by a corridor through the territory of any one of the three Powers whose colonies bordered upon Abyssinia; and by the last week of June the British Government had come to the conclusion that, in the interests of peace, they ought to offer to transfer to Abyssinia a portion of British Somaliland.

One great difficulty in the way of putting forward a settlement on lines such as these lay in the absence of any definite knowledge as to

<sup>1</sup> See the *Survey for 1929*, pp. 216-17.

<sup>2</sup> See *op. cit.*, pp. 210 *seqq.*

<sup>3</sup> Abyssinia's only access to the sea was by means of the railway from Addis Ababa to Djibouti, in French Somaliland.

the scope of Italy's aims in regard to Abyssinia. The steady persistence of her military preparations appeared to be proof of an intention to conquer part at least of the country by force of arms, and the militaristic and aggressive note which was being struck with increasing frequency in public statements was making it seem more doubtful, with every day that passed, whether Signor Mussolini would be able, even if he had the will, to check the machine which he had set in motion before it crossed the dividing line between peace and war. For instance, on the 25th May (the day on which the Council adopted its two resolutions on the Italo-Abyssinian dispute) the Duce declared before the Chamber that 'when the safety of our territories and the lives of our soldiers are at stake we are ready to assume all, even the supreme, responsibilities'. On the 8th June Signor Mussolini replied to Mr. Eden's statement of the 7th by a vigorous affirmation of Italy's intention to pursue her policy in Abyssinia regardless of world opinion. Signor Mussolini had gone to Cagliari, in Sardinia, to review troops of the 'Sabauda' division (the mobilization of which had been ordered at the beginning of May) who were about to embark for East Africa. Addressing the Cagliari Blackshirts, he declared:

We have old and new accounts to settle; we will settle them. We shall take no account of what may be said beyond our frontiers, because we ourselves, we alone and exclusively, are the judges of our interests and the guarantors of our future. We will imitate to the letter those who are lecturing us. They have shown that when it was a question of creating an empire, or of defending it, they never took any account at all of the opinion of the World.

Three days later, in a speech at Sassari, Signor Mussolini declared that 'so-called public opinion abroad' was a 'ridiculous puppet which would be burnt up in the zeal of the Blackshirts'.<sup>1</sup> When Signor Mussolini aimed these shafts at 'British hypocrisy' he lent additional weight to a campaign that had been launched a few weeks earlier by the Italian press, which was now dividing its hostile attentions almost equally between Abyssinia and Great Britain.<sup>2</sup>

These were not favourable omens for the success of a British attempt to mediate between Italy and Abyssinia, but the British Government did not abandon hope that Signor Mussolini might prove himself, as on earlier occasions, less intransigent in deed than in word, and that a settlement which would give Italy all the economic advantages that she could reasonably hope to obtain from Abyssinia might yet be

<sup>1</sup> This was a retort to a reference to the Italo-Abyssinian dispute made by Mr. Baldwin in a speech on the 8th June, when he remarked that 'there was no current of public opinion in Italy on that subject'.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 142 and 151, above.

reached by negotiation. In their efforts to arrange a compromise the British Government had the support of the French Government, and France took part in diplomatic conversations which were in progress in the middle of June. During the second half of the month, however, Franco-British co-operation was hampered by the French reactions to the Anglo-German exchange of notes of the 18th June on naval armaments;<sup>1</sup> and the British Government apparently omitted to notify the French Government of their intention to propose an exchange of territory in East Africa in settlement of the Italo-Abyssinian dispute.

This proposal was laid before Signor Mussolini by Mr. Eden during a visit to Rome on the 24th-26th June, 1935.<sup>2</sup> The suggestion was that Abyssinia might cede to Italy a portion of the Ogaden and that she might in compensation receive from Great Britain an outlet to the sea at Zeila in British Somaliland, together with a corridor, about fifty miles long by twelve miles wide, linking the port with the Abyssinian frontier. If this suggestion was accepted, the British Government would ask nothing for themselves except the retention of grazing rights for the tribes in the ceded area, and they would promise to do what they could to promote the establishment of direct communications between Eritrea and Italian Somaliland. Since the Ogaden province had been the scene of the forward movement on Italy's part which had given rise to her dispute with Abyssinia, it was not unreasonable to assume that the offer of territory in that region would be acceptable to her, at any rate as a bargaining counter; but in fact the whole plan was rejected by Signor Mussolini out of hand. Mr. Eden did not succeed in extracting from the Duce any precise definition of his aims, but his attitude seemed to justify the deduction that he was determined to obtain control over a large part of Abyssinia, if not over the whole country, and that, unless Abyssinia submitted to being swallowed up, he meant to impose his will upon her by force of arms. On the 6th July he made another fiery speech at Ebboli, in which he declared that the battle of Adowa, in view of the disproportionate numbers engaged, was an example of Italian heroism, that the town had only been abandoned because Italy then possessed an 'abject Government', and that the present Government and the 'revolutionary people' of Italy had 'irrevocably decided' to carry the struggle upon which they had entered to its conclusion.

On the 11th July a debate on foreign affairs took place in the

<sup>1</sup> See the *Survey for 1935*, vol. i, Part I, section (vi) (i).

<sup>2</sup> For the antecedents and outcome of this visit, see the *Survey for 1935*, vol. i, loc. cit.



House of Commons, and in his review of the Government's policy Sir Samuel Hoare (who had succeeded Sir John Simon as Foreign Secretary on the 7th June<sup>1</sup>) made the point that the British Government fully admitted Italy's need for expansion.

We have always understood and well understand [he said] Italy's desire for oversea expansion. Indeed, we have in the past done our best to show our sympathy with Italian aspirations in a practical way. In 1925 we ceded Jubaland to Italy, and in the present negotiations we showed our willingness to endeavour to ensure for Italy some territorial satisfaction by a reasonable and legitimate arrangement with Abyssinia.

The British Government also admitted

the justice of some of the criticisms that have been made against the Abyssinian Government. But [asked the Foreign Secretary] are the facts that Italy needs expansion and that complaints are made against the Abyssinian Government sufficient cause for plunging into a war?

Sir Samuel Hoare was not prepared even now to abandon any chance that might

present itself for averting . . . a calamity, whether it be through the machinery of the 1906 treaty or whether it be through the machinery of the League, or whether it be through both.

These conciliatory references to Italy's case failed to elicit any response from Rome. Sir Samuel Hoare's speech was received with reserve, and though there was some expression of satisfaction at his

<sup>1</sup> This date should be borne in mind, with reference to the sequel, by any student of international affairs who is concerned to take a just view of persons, as well as a balanced view of events. For, as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Sir Samuel Hoare became the scapegoat, not only for the transactions for which he was immediately responsible from his accession to the Foreign Office on the 7th June, 1935, down to his resignation on the 18th December, but also for the whole course of British policy in regard to the Italo-Abyssinian conflict down to the latter date. In attempting to judge Sir Samuel Hoare's conduct of affairs on its true merits, it is important to realize how far, before the 7th June, 1935, the position which Sir Samuel Hoare was subsequently trying to maintain had been given away already in the reign of his predecessor in office. Indeed, if Sir Samuel Hoare had cared to make his own apologia at the expense of a colleague, he might have argued, with considerable force, that the diplomatic battle had already been lost for him before he was asked by Mr. Baldwin to do his best to win it. It is true that, as a member of the Cabinet, Sir Samuel Hoare did also bear his official share of the corporate responsibility of Cabinet Ministers for the foreign policy of the United Kingdom, even during the period between the beginning of the Walwal incident and his own transfer to the Foreign Office from the India Office. At the same time, his moral responsibility for sins of omission at the Foreign Office during those critical and perhaps decisive early months of 1935 can hardly be pressed, when it is remembered that at that time Sir Samuel Hoare was still preoccupied with his long and arduous task of piloting the Government of India Bill into port.

explicit recognition of Italy's need for expansion, the Italian Government showed that they did not intend to be turned from the path which they had decided to follow. They gave orders on the 15th July for the mobilization of two more divisions—one of regular troops and one of Blackshirts—for service in East Africa,<sup>1</sup> and for the immediate building of ten new submarines.

After the failure of their attempt to arrange a compromise, the British Government took the view that it was now the turn of the French Government to make suggestions, and during the first half of July the British Ambassador in Paris was a frequent visitor at the Quai d'Orsay. The nature of the compromise which Mr. Eden had suggested in Rome, however, was now constituting an additional obstacle in the way of Anglo-French co-operation. The immediate result of the British Government's proposal had been to bring down a shower of abuse both at home and abroad. Their domestic critics included not only 'die-hards' who were aghast at the idea of giving away even the smallest and least valuable portion of the British Empire; they were also challenged on the ground that they had proposed to betray a sacred trust by handing over to Abyssinia like chattels the native inhabitants of a portion of British Somaliland.<sup>2</sup> A good deal of foreign comment was based on the unflattering assumption that the British Government must be acting from motives of self-interest, while in France the resentment which was already being felt against Great Britain on account of the Anglo-German naval agreement was deepened by the disclosure of the fact that the British Government had put forward, without consulting the French Government, a proposal which affected French interests. (The transfer of Zeila to Abyssinia would have destroyed the virtual monopoly which France enjoyed in the transport of goods and passengers to and from Abyssinia by way of the Addis Ababa-Djibouti Railway.)<sup>3</sup> In these

<sup>1</sup> This brought the forces mobilized for service abroad up to five divisions of regular troops and five divisions of militia. In addition, seven battalions had been sent separately. Between the end of January 1935 and the third week of June, nearly 67,000 Italian troops were reported to have passed through the Suez Canal, and the numbers during the first fortnight of July were said to amount to 15,000.

<sup>2</sup> See in particular the questions and answers in the House of Commons at Westminster on the 4th and 8th July and the debate on the 11th July. Mr. Malcom MacDonald, the Secretary for the Colonies, told a questioner on the 4th July that the number of inhabitants of Zeila itself fluctuated between 3,000 and 7,000 and that there were no permanent inhabitants of the hinterland, which was visited at intervals by nomadic tribesmen whose grazing rights the British Government had intended to reserve.

<sup>3</sup> Unless, of course, the British Government's offer to transfer the Zeila corridor to Abyssinia had been made subject to the condition that the corridor

circumstances the French Government showed no inclination to fall in with the suggestion which was made by the British Government that France should summon a three-Power conference which would attempt to find a solution on the basis of the 1906 treaty regarding Abyssinia. The French Government believed that a proposal for a formal conference would be rejected by Italy, and they preferred to postpone any fresh action until the end of the month, when the League Council would have to meet to consider the situation created by the break-down of the arbitral procedure at Scheveningen. In the meantime, diplomatic conversations continued between Paris and Rome, with the primary object, on the French side, of persuading Signor Mussolini to send a representative to attend the Council meeting.

During this period of abortive arbitration and negotiation the Abyssinian Government could do little but look on while Italian troops and munitions were accumulating on their borders and the construction of roads, the organization of water-supplies, and other preparatory work was in full swing in Eritrea and Somaliland. On the 19th June they had despatched another appeal to the League Council<sup>1</sup> protesting against the continuance of Italian preparations and the allegations and threats against Abyssinia which were being made in the Italian press and in public speeches. They pointed out that, since their urgent appeal under Article 15 of the Covenant on the 17th March, the situation had 'gone from bad to worse. An aggression upon the independence and integrity of Ethiopia' seemed 'imminent'. In the hope of averting this danger, they asked the Council to designate immediately neutral observers who would go to frontier districts of Abyssinia, investigate the situation and make an inquiry into alleged or actual incidents, and report direct to the Council. The Abyssinian Government would 'afford the observers all the aid and assistance necessary to the performance of their task', and they were also ready to pay the costs of the inquiry. These suggestions were presumably communicated to the members of the Council by the Secretariat, but no other action was taken on them.

At the beginning of July the Emperor of Abyssinia appealed to the American Government to invoke the terms of the Pact of Paris for the Renunciation of War (the Kellogg-Briand Pact) of which both Italy and Abyssinia were signatories. In 1932 the then Secretary

must not be turned to account by the construction, along it, of an all-Ethiopian railway in competition with the French line from Djibouti to Addis Ababa.

<sup>1</sup> Text in *League of Nations Official Journal*, August 1935, pp. 972-3.

of State at Washington, Mr. Stimson, had taken action of the kind suggested in connexion with the Sino-Japanese dispute,<sup>1</sup> but the response to this American initiative had been disappointing, and in 1935 the Administration was not disposed to lay itself open to another rebuff.<sup>2</sup> The American Government confined themselves to indications that the moral support of the United States would be behind any efforts that might be made to keep the peace between Abyssinia and Italy, and would be withdrawn from Italy if she disregarded her obligation not to resort to war; and this must have been poor consolation to the Abyssinians if they had been hoping for some dramatic gesture from Washington which might pull Italy up and check her headlong course before it was too late. Moreover, the steps which were being taken in Washington in July to prepare legislation designed to safeguard the neutrality of the United States in the event of war<sup>3</sup> were not calculated to relieve the concern which was now being felt in Addis Ababa on account of the difficulties which the Government were experiencing in supplementing their inadequate supplies of munitions.

During the early months of 1935 the Abyssinian Government had placed orders, especially for ammunition, with a number of armament firms in European countries,<sup>4</sup> and by the beginning of April consignments of munitions from Germany, Sweden and Denmark were said to be arriving at Djibouti. A month later the Italian Government were reported to have made representations to the Governments of countries which they believed to be supplying armaments to Abyssinia to the effect that the continuance of such supplies would be regarded as an unfriendly act. Whether *post hoc* or *propter hoc*, restrictions on the export of arms and munitions to Abyssinia were imposed during the early summer by a number of Governments, including those of Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Denmark and France.<sup>5</sup> As for the British

<sup>1</sup> See the *Survey for 1932*, Part V, section (iv) (b).

<sup>2</sup> See p. 239, below.

<sup>3</sup> The neutrality resolution which became law on the 31st August, 1935, made it mandatory for the President to prohibit shipment of arms and munitions to any belligerent states (see further pp. 240-1, below).

<sup>4</sup> Reports were published at intervals to the effect that Abyssinia was obtaining supplies from Japan, but at the end of July it was announced in Japan that no permits had been issued for the export of arms to Abyssinia, and a rumour which was current early in August to the effect that a contract had been concluded for a large consignment of munitions from Japan was denied by the Abyssinian Government.

<sup>5</sup> In the middle of June, the French Government were reported to have informed the Italian Government that all requests from Abyssinia for the supply of munitions were being refused. The French authorities at Djibouti were also said to be making difficulties in July over the granting of transit authorizations for the munitions which were arriving at the port. (See also p. 380, footnote 2, below.)

Government, they adopted an attitude of caution in the matter from an early stage of the dispute. On the 21st May it was stated in the House of Lords at Westminster that no licences for the export of arms to Abyssinia had been issued for some months, and during the following weeks a series of parliamentary questions elicited the reply that the question whether licences should be granted was still under consideration. Finally, on the 25th July, Sir Samuel Hoare announced the Government's decision to withhold 'for the present' licences for the export of arms to either Abyssinia or Italy, though the transit of consignments to Abyssinia across British or British protected territory would be permitted, in accordance with the terms of the 1930 treaty.<sup>1</sup>

(e) THE LEAGUE COUNCIL'S SESSION OF THE 31ST JULY-3RD AUGUST, 1935, AND THE ARBITRAL DECISION ON THE WALWAL INCIDENT

The Italian Government's rejection of the proposal which Mr. Eden laid before Signor Mussolini in the last week of June, combined with the Duce's fiery speeches, brought home to the Governments and peoples of the states members of the League of Nations the fact that they might soon be faced with the choice between condoning an act of aggression by one League member upon another or attempting to restrain a Great Power—if necessary by the use of the machinery provided in the Covenant—from the exercise of its sovereign will. When, in the last week of July, the members of the Council received a notice summoning them to an extraordinary meeting on the 31st, none of them could disguise from themselves the fact that the situation was fraught with the gravest danger to the whole 'post-war' system of collective security. The prospect for a satisfactory outcome of the Council meeting would have been better if the French and British Governments, to which the smaller states members of the Council naturally looked for a lead, had been of one mind as to the best course to pursue. The chief concern of the French Government was still to postpone definite action by the Council in the hope that the crisis might yet be averted by negotiation outside Geneva. It was pointed out in British circles, however, that, if the League was to retain the least vestige of moral authority, the Council must accede to the repeated requests which it had received from Abyssinia and discuss the situation in all its aspects. Indeed, the Council had already decided, by its second resolution of the 25th May, that it would deal with the dispute if a settlement had not been reached by

<sup>1</sup> See p. 123, above.

means of conciliation and arbitration before the 25th August; and in the British view the situation had developed on such serious lines since the end of May that the Council ought to take the bull by the horns without further delay.

In the middle of July the Secretary-General of the League, Monsieur Avenol, had visited London and Paris, and in the course of his conversations with British and French Ministers the steps which would have to be taken in order to put the machinery of the Covenant into operation were believed to have come under review. The discussions were said to have been more barren in Paris than in London, owing to the French Government's reluctance to commit themselves to any definite step. As justification for their attitude the French Government were able to point to the outcome of the diplomatic negotiations which continued up to the eve of the Council Meeting. The Italian Government responded to French persuasions to the extent of agreeing to send a representative to Geneva, on the understanding that the Council would limit its action to the first measure indicated in the resolution of the 25th May—that is, the appointment of a fifth arbitrator. They were only ready to agree to the nomination of a fifth arbitrator, however, on the condition that Abyssinia abandoned her point of view that the interpretation of frontier treaties was within the competence of the Commission of Conciliation and Arbitration.<sup>1</sup> On the general question of Italo-Abyssinian relations the Italian Government still maintained that the Council had no jurisdiction—in their opinion the League could only intervene in the dispute to expel Abyssinia from membership<sup>2</sup>—but they appeared to be more favourably disposed than they had been earlier in the month towards the suggestion that Italo-Abyssinian relations might be discussed at a conference of the signatories of the 1906 treaty.

In the hope that the more conciliatory attitude of Italy meant that Signor Mussolini might yet be persuaded to accept a peaceful settlement, the British Government concurred once again in the French view. It was agreed that any open discussion of the wider issues by the Council should be postponed once more, and that a final attempt should be made to deal with the whole problem by direct negotiation with Italy. Mr. Eden, who represented the British Government at

<sup>1</sup> On the 25th July the Italian Government had notified the Secretary-General that they had twice informed the Abyssinian Government of their readiness to resume the suspended arbitral procedure as soon as the Abyssinian Government withdrew their claim to have the frontier question as a whole examined.

<sup>2</sup> This view had been expressed by Signor Gayda in an article in the *Giornale d'Italia* on the 16th July, 1935.

the Council meeting, broke his journey to Geneva in Paris, where he and Monsieur Laval agreed on the programme which they would jointly support at Geneva. The Abyssinian Government had already been induced to surrender to Italy's demand that they should abandon their insistence upon the consideration of frontier questions by the Commission of Conciliation and Arbitration, and in a telegram of the 28th July they had intimated that they would accept the Council's decision as to the competence of the arbitrators. They also refrained from making a formal request that the Council should discuss Italo-Abyssinian relations in general at its forthcoming session, and from bringing up again their suggestion for the despatch of a neutral commission. The receipt of this communication at Geneva ensured the presence of an Italian representative, and Baron Aloisi was among the members of the Council who assembled on the 31st July.

The Council, at its meeting on that day, confined itself to the formal adoption of its agenda and then adjourned, on Monsieur Laval's proposal, in order to allow time for informal negotiations. Monsieur Litvinov, as the representative of the fourth Great Power which was a member of the Council, took part in the search for a formula which was carried on during the next few days. The Abyssinian representatives, as usual, were extremely conciliatory and ready to fall in with the wishes of the Great Powers. They consented to an interpretation of the resolution of the 25th May which supported the Italian thesis that frontier questions were not within the competence of the Commission on Arbitration and Conciliation, and Baron Aloisi, having won this point, made no difficulties regarding the appointment of a fifth arbitrator to determine the responsibility for the Walwal incident. Baron Aloisi also agreed to the proposal that negotiations should take place in the near future between the signatories of the 1906 treaty. Mr. Eden was reported to have fought hard for the admission of Abyssinia to this projected conference, the outcome of which would vitally affect her future, but on this question Baron Aloisi refused to yield. The Abyssinians accepted their exclusion, though not without protest, and received assurances from France and Great Britain that the Emperor would be kept informed of the progress of the negotiations and that no decision relating to Abyssinia would be taken without his consent. The Italian Government also rejected any proposals that the three-Power negotiations should take place under the aegis of the League. This was another point to which Mr. Eden attached great importance, but on this also he was defeated.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Monsieur Laval was said to have had a conversation with Signor Mussolini over the telephone on this question, but the Duce remained obdurate.

He succeeded, however, in securing general acceptance of a suggestion that the Council should fix a definite date on which it would proceed to deal with the whole problem, in the light of such developments as might take place meanwhile in consequence of the renewal of arbitral procedure and the convocation of a three-Power conference.

After three days and nights of intensive negotiation, agreement was reached on two resolutions, which were approved by the Council on the 3rd August. The first resolution interpreted the terms of reference of the Commission of Arbitration and Conciliation. It declared that

the two parties did not agree that the Commission should examine frontier questions or give a legal interpretation of the agreements and treaties concerning the frontier.

Such questions were therefore not within the competence of the Commission, which 'must not . . . prejudge the solution of questions which' did 'not fall within its province' by founding 'its decision on the opinion that the place at which the [Walwal] incident occurred' was 'under the sovereignty either of Italy or of Ethiopia'. It was, however, declared to be

open to the Commission to take into consideration, without entering upon any discussion on the matter, the conviction that was held by the local authorities on either side as to the sovereignty over the place of the incident.

The resolution also took note of declarations by the two parties to the effect that the four arbitrators would proceed without delay to designate a fifth arbitrator, and, having expressed confidence that the procedure would have brought about the settlement of the dispute by the 1st September, it invited the parties to communicate the results to the Council not later than the 4th September, 1935.

By the second resolution the Council decided

to meet in any event on the 4th September, 1935, to undertake the general examination, in its various aspects, of the relations between Italy and Ethiopia.

The first resolution was accepted by Baron Aloisi as well as by Monsieur Jèze for Abyssinia and by all the members of the Council, but in regard to the second resolution the Italian representative followed the precedent which he had set for himself on the 25th May and abstained from voting.

In deference to the Italian objections neither resolution contained any reference to the question of the three-Power negotiations, but a *communiqué* was issued to the press in the following terms:



The representatives of the Governments of the United Kingdom, France and Italy, having met together at Geneva on the 1st August, 1935, in view of the fact that the three Powers signatories of the Treaty of the 30th December, 1906, concerning Ethiopia have already declared themselves ready to undertake negotiations among themselves with a view to facilitating a solution of the differences existing between Italy and Ethiopia, have agreed to open these conversations at the earliest possible date.

At the meeting of the Council a formal announcement of these forthcoming three-Power conversations was made by Mr. Eden,<sup>1</sup> who added that he would 'report their outcome to the Council at its next session'. The Council, by the voice of its President, formally expressed its satisfaction at this arrangement and its hope of a successful outcome.

Thus the upshot of the Council's meeting was an agreement for the resumption of arbitral procedure, on Italy's terms, for the settlement of a minor issue—the Walwal incident; an agreement that the major issues should be handled outside the League framework by negotiation between France, Great Britain and Italy; and an agreement, which was neither accepted nor explicitly rejected by Italy, that the League Council should take up the dispute at a definite date, whatever stage it might have reached by then. The terms in which this last agreement was couched appeared to rule out the possibility of any further postponement of the Council's discussion after the 4th September, and on this point the Abyssinian representatives expressed great satisfaction. Monsieur Jèze declared that the Ethiopian Government hailed the Council's decision 'with joy and gratitude', in the hope that a 'full and general examination' would 'enable the Council to establish, once and for all and on a solid basis, permanent, friendly and trustful relations between Ethiopia and Italy'. In other respects, however, the Italians appeared to have driven a bargain which was very much to their advantage. In particular, they had once more avoided giving any undertaking to suspend their military preparations,<sup>2</sup> and they

<sup>1</sup> It had been understood that the announcement was to be made jointly by Monsieur Laval and Mr. Eden, but at the last moment Monsieur Laval—apparently as a further gesture of conciliation towards Italy—decided to omit any reference to the three-Power conference from his speech. Instead, he expressed the opinion that, with 'a final settlement of the Walwal incident', which now appeared to be in sight, the Council would have 'fulfilled once more its great and noble mission', and that 'all those throughout the World who' remained 'attached to the Geneva institution' would 'rejoice'. Monsieur Laval did, it was true, admit that the situation was still serious, and promised to do all in his power 'to explore every possibility of conciliation'.

<sup>2</sup> Baron Aloisi was also said to have opposed the inclusion in the Council's resolution of any reference to Article 5 of the 1928 treaty, by which the parties

had thus obtained another month's grace in which to complete their arrangements for an attack on Abyssinia.

The first resolution of the 3rd August was implemented without delay, and the Walwal incident was finally disposed of within the time-limit indicated by the resolution. On the 8th August it was announced that Monsieur Politis had accepted office as the fifth arbitrator; the Commission, thus augmented, met in Paris on the 19th August; and on the 3rd September it rendered a unanimous award.

In regard to the responsibility for the Walwal incident, the Commission, 'taking into account the limit of its powers under the resolution adopted by the Council of the League of Nations on the 3rd August', found:

(1) That neither the Italian Government nor its agents on the spot can be held responsible in any way for the actual Walwal incident; the allegations brought against them by the Ethiopian Government are disproved in particular by the many precautions taken by them to prevent any incident on the occasion of the assembly at Walwal of Ethiopian regular and irregular troops, and also by the absence of any interest on their part in provoking the incident of the 5th December; and

(2) That, although the Ethiopian Government also had no reasonable interest in provoking that engagement, its local authorities, by their attitude, and particularly by the concentration and maintenance, after the departure of the Anglo-Ethiopian Commission, of numerous troops in the proximity of the Italian line at Walwal, may have given the impression that they had aggressive intentions—which would seem to render the Italian version plausible—but that nevertheless it had not been shown that they can be held responsible for the actual incident of the 5th December.

In regard to the responsibility for the incidents which had taken place between the 6th December, 1934, and the 25th May, 1935, the Commission, after 'a careful examination of the facts alleged on both side', reported that the incidents 'which followed upon the Walwal incident were of an accidental character', while others, which were unconnected with the Walwal affair, 'were for the most part not serious and of very ordinary occurrence in the region in which they took place'. They were of opinion, therefore, that, 'in respect of these minor incidents, no international responsibility need be involved'.

had undertaken not to have recourse to force for the settlement of their disputes. He gave way on this point, however, and the resolution took 'note that the representatives of the two parties have declared that they intend to pursue the procedure of conciliation and arbitration under the conditions laid down in Article 5 of the Treaty of 1928'.

In thus refraining from allocating any direct blame to either side, the members of the Commission (and particularly the fifth member) no doubt had in mind the fact that their functions included conciliation no less than arbitration. If the Italians received a more generous coating of whitewash than the Abyssinians, the latter could take comfort from the thought that Italy's successful opposition to the inclusion of the interpretation of frontier treaties in the Commission's terms of reference supported rather than invalidated the Abyssinian argument that the responsibility for the Walwal incident depended upon the ownership of the territory in which the wells were situated. In any case the fight at Walwal had long since appeared in its true light as a comparatively trivial frontier incident, and the fictitious importance which it had acquired as a factor in Italo-Abyssinian relations had been overshadowed by subsequent developments. The award of the Commission of Conciliation and Arbitration might extinguish the original spark, but it could not stamp out the train which that spark had fired. By the beginning of September 1935, indeed, it was evidently only a matter of weeks, or even days, before an explosion took place; for the latest international effort to avert the catastrophe had broken down in a manner which destroyed the last vestige of hope that Italy's quarrel with Abyssinia might be settled without resort to war.

#### (f) THE THREE-POWER CONFERENCE IN PARIS (AUGUST 1935)

The conference between France, Great Britain and Italy to consider the Italo-Abyssinian dispute was convened in Paris on the 15th August. In view of Mr. Eden's promise to report the outcome of the proceedings to the League Council on the 4th September, it was evident that any settlement which might be reached must be acceptable not only to Italy and Abyssinia but also to the states members of the League in their capacity as guarantors of the independence and integrity of a fellow member. A settlement could only be achieved if the maximum level to which Abyssinia would raise her concessions could be made to coincide with the minimum level to which Italy would reduce her demands; and, in view of the respective attitudes of the two parties hitherto, the line of least resistance for the French and British mediators would clearly lie in the direction of advising Abyssinia to raise the level of her offers. French preoccupation with the question of saving Franco-Italian friendship from shipwreck made it all the more necessary that the British negotiators should bear constantly in mind the duty of the mediators to secure fair play for

the absent Abyssinia and to avoid the exercise of any undue pressure upon her to agree to measures exceeding the limits which she was prepared to accept of her own free will.

During July the suggestion had been canvassed in quarters friendly to Italy that the best solution of the difficulties which had arisen would be found in the recognition by the League of a mandate or protectorate over Abyssinia which might be administered by Italy alone or by Italy in collaboration with other Powers. While there was no certainty that Italy would be content with any arrangement short of the establishment of complete domination over Abyssinia, it was obvious that Abyssinia did not intend voluntarily to submit to Italian control, in whatever form it might be disguised. This was clear from statements which the Emperor had made from time to time to representatives of the European and American press, and from a speech which he delivered before an assembly of notables in the Parliament House at Addis Ababa on the 18th July. On this occasion the Emperor definitely rejected the idea that a protectorate or mandate might be exercised over Abyssinia by any Power or Powers, and declared that his country was ready to defend its independence to the last man. On the other hand, the Emperor let it be known that he was prepared to consider the granting of extensive economic concessions to Italians and other Europeans (including a concession for the building of an Italian railway, but not including the right to control over a railway zone),<sup>1</sup> while the possibility of territorial concessions, on a basis similar to that which the British Government had suggested at the end of June, was also not excluded. Moreover, before the three-Power negotiations were actually opened in Paris, the British and French Governments had apparently ascertained that the Emperor, provided that the independence of his country and his own political supremacy were fully maintained, was ready to accept the assistance of European Governments in the administrative and economic organization of his country on lines which would afford ample opportunity for foreign economic penetration and give a reasonable assurance of security to settlers in Abyssinia and to the inhabitants of adjoining territories.

Thus, so far as the Abyssinian standpoint was concerned, there appeared to exist the basis for a compromise which would redress Italy's genuine grievances and give her substantial economic advantages. It remained to be seen whether Italy's acceptance of the proposal for a conference indicated that she was prepared to con-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the statement made by an official spokesman to the representative of *The Daily Telegraph* in September (see p. 197, below).

sider any settlement which would give her less than she might hope to obtain for herself by force of arms. All the signs, unfortunately, still pointed in the opposite direction. On the 31st July, for instance, (the date of the Council meeting in Geneva), an article in the *Popolo d'Italia*—which, though unsigned, was known to be from Signor Mussolini's pen—had declared that the Italo-Abyssinian problem, 'with Geneva, without Geneva, against Geneva', admitted 'but one solution'.<sup>1</sup> A week later (after the Italian Government had agreed to attend the conference in Paris) orders were given for the mobilization of two more divisions; and on the 15th August (the day on which the Paris Conference began) some 150,000 men who belonged to classes which had already been called up, but who had been exempt hitherto for special reasons, were ordered to report for service by the end of September. It was officially stated that when these new measures had been carried out, Italy would have 1,000,000 men under arms.

The opening of the three-Power conference was preceded by informal conversations in Paris, in which Mr. Eden, who arrived on the 13th August for this purpose, Monsieur Laval, and Monsieur Teclé Hawariate took part. When Baron Aloisi put in an appearance on the 15th, the British and French representatives directed their first efforts towards obtaining from him a full statement of Italy's case against Abyssinia and of the minimum terms on which she would agree to a peaceful settlement. They at once encountered the difficulty that Baron Aloisi's instructions appeared to debar him from making any detailed statement of Italy's demands. He was reported to have refused to give any undertaking to refrain from the use of force and to have intimated that Italy must either have a protectorate over the whole of Abyssinia or absolute control over a large area for Italian settlement—basing this claim, apparently, on the argument that the 1906 treaty had recognized Italy's right to an exclusive sphere of influence, which was indistinguishable, in the Italian view, from a protectorate. Although the conversations were suspended in order to allow Baron Aloisi to consult his principal by telephone, he remained unable or unwilling to formulate Italy's conditions in precise terms. The British and French representatives therefore decided that there was nothing for them to do except draw up a settlement, on lines which appeared to them fair and reasonable and such as they might recommend with a good conscience for acceptance by Abyssinia, and present it to the Italian Government for approval or rejection. These Anglo-French proposals were trans-

<sup>1</sup> See the passage quoted from this article on p. 20, footnote 2, above.

mitted to Rome on the evening of Friday the 16th August. Signor Mussolini spent the week-end at Benevento and Naples, where he reviewed troops who were about to embark for East Africa and assured them that they were going to a war of conquest and that they must be ready to crush every obstacle until they had reached their goal. His reply to the Anglo-French communication, which was received in Paris on the morning of the 18th August, constituted a definite refusal even to discuss the suggestions which had been put forward for his consideration. Signor Mussolini's rejection of the Anglo-French plan was communicated by Baron Aloisi to Monsieur Laval and Mr. Eden, who decided in their turn that, in view of the Italian attitude, there was no basis for further discussion. During the evening of the 18th a *communiqué* was issued announcing the indefinite adjournment of the conference.

The nature of the Anglo-French proposals which were drawn up in Paris was indicated as follows by Mr. Eden in his report to the Council of the League on the negotiations:

While not failing to recognize that the situation of Ethiopia might call for extensive reforms, it seemed to us that these reforms should be freely assented to by Ethiopia in the fullness of her sovereignty and without anything being imposed on her contrary to her independence or her integrity. As a member of the League of Nations, Ethiopia might appeal to the League for the collaboration and assistance necessary to assure the economic development and administrative reorganization of the country. France, the United Kingdom and Italy, as limitrophe Powers, would be particularly well qualified to lend this collective assistance, whether a mission for this purpose were entrusted to them by the Council with the assent of Ethiopia or whether the Council of the League of Nations were to be invited to give its approval to a treaty concluded between the three Powers and the Ethiopian Government.

The work of reorganization was to have extended to the most varied fields of national life, such as economic, financial, commercial and constructional development; foreign settlement; modernization of administrative services; anti-slavery measures and frontier and other police services. The free activity of foreigners in the economic sphere would have been respected.

On the other hand, the collective character of the assistance would not have prevented particular account being taken of the special interests of Italy, without prejudice to the recognized rights of France and the United Kingdom.

Finally, we did not examine, but we did not in any way exclude, the possibility of territorial adjustments to which Italy and Ethiopia might agree.

With the break-down of the conference in Paris, the last hope of a peaceful settlement by negotiation disappeared, and the conclusion

that Italy intended to commit an act of aggression in the near future could not be avoided. Thus the Governments of the states members of the League, in making their preparations for attendance at the forthcoming sessions of the Council and the Assembly, had to decide what course they were to follow in the highly probable event of their being called upon to declare their attitude in regard to the application of Article 16 of the Covenant against Italy.

Once more, no definite lead in the matter was forthcoming from either Great Britain or France. The hopes of those who looked to the British Government for a lead were raised when it became known that Ministers were being asked to interrupt their holidays and return to London for a Cabinet meeting on the 22nd August, but the result of their deliberations, so far as it was made public, disappointed these hopes. It was announced that the British Government had decided to maintain the closest contact with the French Government and to continue diplomatic negotiations with Italy in the interval before the 4th September, when the Council of the League was to meet; that they had decided to keep the embargo on the export of arms to both Italy and Abyssinia in force for the present;<sup>1</sup> and that British policy at Geneva would be in accordance with previous declarations that all Great Britain's obligations under the Covenant would be carried out provided that other Powers were equally ready to fulfil their obligations.<sup>2</sup> Thus the British Government not only gave no indica-

<sup>1</sup> Ten days earlier, on the 12th August, the Abyssinian Government had appealed to the League Council to put an end to the restrictions on the supply of munitions to Abyssinia. 'The Royal Italian Government', it was pointed out, 'is continuing to send troops and ammunition to East Africa; it is ceaselessly manufacturing arms and implements of war, with the solemnly avowed intention of using them against the Ethiopian Empire. There is no manufacture in Ethiopia, either public or private, of arms or munitions of war. The Imperial Ethiopian Government to-day finds it absolutely impossible to obtain means of defence outside its own frontiers. Whenever it attempts to obtain them, it meets with prohibitions and export embargoes. Is that real neutrality? Is it just?'

<sup>2</sup> The latest statement of British policy had been made by Sir Samuel Hoare in the House of Commons at Westminster on the 1st August, in the course of a debate on foreign affairs. The British Government, he declared, approached the Italo-Abyssinian problem

'from the realist practical attitude, that admitted its perplexities and was determined to make every reasonable effort to avert war. It was easy and perhaps tempting to jump into the arena impetuously, throw down the glove and challenge any one who disagreed to fight. Supposing, however, that that attitude would destroy for years the basis of international co-operation; supposing the result of that action would cripple the League for a generation to come. Rashness, however courageous it might be, would be folly to the point of criminal folly. Moreover, they would be failing to

tion of what steps, if any, they would be prepared to take to apply sanctions against Italy if she should be declared an aggressor; they did not even state in unmistakable terms that they would join in pronouncing an Italian attack upon Abyssinia to be an act of aggression within the meaning of the Covenant.

The chief concern of the French Government, now that war in East Africa appeared to be inevitable, was to prevent the conflict from spreading to Europe, and with this object in view they were anxious that any discussion of sanctions, even if it could not be avoided altogether, should at any rate be postponed until the latest possible moment. A meeting of the French Council of Ministers was held on the 28th August, but, although it was believed to have spent some three hours in discussing the Italo-Abyssinian crisis, the official statement which was issued at the end of the meeting contained no clue as to the policy which Monsieur Laval was likely to follow at Geneva.

On the same day (the 28th August) a meeting of the Italian Cabinet took place at Bolzano (Botzen), where most of the members of the Government, including Signor Mussolini, were staying in order to take part in military manœuvres which were in progress in the Alto Adige (the South Tirol). The official *communiqué* showed that the cautious reserve of the British and French Governments on the subject of sanctions did not prevent the Italian Government from realizing that the application of Article 16 of the Covenant would be a burning question at Geneva in a few days' time. The Council of Ministers declared

to the Italian people and to the other peoples that to speak of sanctions is to place oneself on a slope which may possibly lead down to the gravest complications.

The *communiqué* went on to express the opinion that there would be

found in the League Council a group of responsible and well-informed men ready to reject every hateful and dangerous proposal of sanctions against a nation such as Italy; capable also of remembering that in

achieve the object for which they acted. So far from averting war, they would be more likely to extend its scope.'

The British Government's policy was

'the reverse of this rash and dangerous attitude. Nevertheless, we realize as keenly as any one the gravity of the issue at stake. We are second to no one in our intention to carry out our obligations under the Treaties and under the Covenant. Indeed, it is just because we realize the gravity of the issues that we are determined to take no rash steps which would make the situation irredeemable.'



preceding and graver cases the League of Nations has neither voted nor, much less, been able to apply, sanctions of any kind.

The Government assured the Italian people

that the problem of sanctions has been examined by the highest military authorities of the régime in all its aspects, and, so far as sanctions of a military character are concerned, the decisions and measures necessary for facing them have already been taken some time ago.

In order 'to guarantee Italy's economic resistance' against possible developments, the Cabinet decided on the immediate introduction of certain economic and financial measures providing *inter alia* for the compulsory cession of credits abroad and the conversion of foreign bonds and of Italian bonds issued abroad, the temporary limitation of the dividends of commercial companies, and the employment of substitute fuels by owners of public or private motor-vehicles.<sup>1</sup>

In pursuance of the press campaign against Great Britain, which had been representing H.M. Government as taking the lead, from purely selfish motives, in opposing Italy's efforts to improve her position, the Cabinet's *communiqué* contained assurances that British interests would not suffer as a result of Italian action in Abyssinia, and a declaration that Italy had no desire to quarrel with Great Britain. Italy's 'colonial question', it was explained, would not 'have repercussions on the European situation' unless there was 'a desire to run the risk of unloosing a new world war in order to prevent a Great Power like Italy from bringing order to a vast country where terrible slavery reigns'.

More satisfactory, from the international point of view, was the announcement that an Italian representative would attend the League Council meeting on the 4th September and that a memorandum was being prepared which would set out in full the Italian case against Abyssinia. This passage in the Italian Cabinet's *communiqué* allayed the apprehension, which had been felt with special strength in France, that Italy would resign her membership of the League if the Council were to deal with the Italo-Abyssinian dispute in any but the most perfunctory manner. Signor Mussolini's decision to lay his case before the Council meant at least that he recognized the League's jurisdiction in the dispute, even though it did not appear from the rest of the *communiqué* that he had the slightest intention of being deflected from his path by any action that the Council might take.

During the last few days of August, further conversations took place in Paris between Monsieur Laval and the Ambassadors of Italy

<sup>1</sup> See p. 421, below.

and of Great Britain, but these did not result in any perceptible change in the situation. The only new developments which took place before the meeting of the League Council arose out of an announcement which was made in Addis Ababa on the 30th August. This was to the effect that the Emperor of Abyssinia had granted to a British subject, Mr. F. W. Rickett, an exclusive concession for seventy-five years for the exploitation of petroleum and subsidiary products in a vast area extending over the whole of the eastern half of Abyssinia and comprising the hinterland of Eritrea and of Italian, British and French Somaliland.<sup>1</sup> The accusations which were levelled against the British Government when this news was first published were subsequently proved to have no foundation in fact.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Rickett, though of British nationality, was acting as agent for an American company, the African Development and Exploration Company, which had been incorporated on the 11th July, 1935, and for which the Standard-Vacuum Oil Company, after a preliminary denial, ultimately acknowledged responsibility. The British Government promptly issued a statement denying any knowledge of the transaction, and the British Minister in Addis Ababa, Sir Sidney Barton, was instructed to advise the Emperor to cancel the concession. According to press reports, these British representations elicited a refusal from the Emperor to reconsider his decision, and on the 3rd September an official *communiqué* was issued by the Abyssinian Government, which claimed that they were acting within their sovereign rights in granting the concession, and declared that they were not disposed to change their policy. The *communiqué* stated

<sup>1</sup> A summary of the terms of the concession, said to be taken from the official text of the contract, was published by *The New York Times* on the 1st September, 1935. Minerals, other than petroleum, were specifically excluded from the concession; and if precious stones or metals were discovered, a special contract would be required for their exploitation.

According to one report from Addis Ababa, the concession had been under negotiation for three years, but the American company to which it had been offered in the first place (whose agent was an Italian) had refused to accept the contract terms proposed by the Abyssinian Government.

<sup>2</sup> The three signatories of the 1906 treaty regarding Abyssinia had undertaken to act in concert to safeguard the interests of France and Italy in the hinterland of their East African possessions, whereas the British interests referred to in the treaty were those in the Nile Basin. Thus, if the charge against the British Government of having 'done a deal' with Abyssinia had been proved true, they would have been guilty of neglecting their obligations under the 1906 treaty as well as of reversing the whole policy which they had followed in recent months.

Abyssinia had not been a party to the 1906 treaty and had never recognized its validity, and she could and did rebut the charge that she was acting in defiance of her treaty obligations by granting the concession.

explicitly that the British Government had 'not been involved directly or indirectly in the granting of this concession to an American company'.

The immediate advantages which the Abyssinians expected to derive from this arrangement were presumably financial—it was understood that the company was prepared to advance a large sum which could be used for the purchase of munitions and other stores—but no doubt they hoped also that the Italian Government might be restrained by the existence of American interests in the territory which they were planning to invade. It was precisely this consideration, however, which proved fatal to the scheme. The concession ran counter to the American policy of avoiding any commitment which might involve the United States in war, and as soon as the news that a contract had been signed was made public, Mr. Cordell Hull made it clear that the State Department accepted no responsibility for the protection of American interests concerned in the concession. On the 3rd September it was announced officially in Washington that the Standard-Vacuum Oil Company had sought the advice of the State Department on the situation; that they had been informed that the granting of the concession 'had been the cause of great embarrassment' to the American Government and to other Governments which were 'making strenuous and sincere efforts for the preservation of peace'; and that they had accepted the advice which they had received to terminate the concession at the earliest possible moment. With this decision to cancel the concession, the episode came to an abrupt end.<sup>1</sup>

**(v) The Consideration of the Italo-Abyssinian Dispute by the League Council and Assembly; and the Finding that Italy had resorted to War in Violation of Article 12 of the Covenant (4th September–7th October, 1935).**

When the League Council met in Geneva on the 4th September, 1935, under the chairmanship of Señor Ruiz-Guiñazú (Argentina), the chairman reminded his colleagues that—notwithstanding the settlement of the Walwal incident since the Council's last meeting in August<sup>2</sup>—the Council had 'decided to meet in any event on the 4th

<sup>1</sup> Simultaneously with the cancellation of the Rickett Concession, the Ethiopian Minister in London made it known that a 90-days' option on a concession for the exploitation of Abyssinian mineral resources had been negotiated with an American subject, Mr. Leo Chertok, who had a certain amount of British backing. In consequence of the official attitude of disapproval in London and Washington, this project also came to nothing.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 170–1, above.

September to undertake the general examination, in its various aspects, of the relations between Italy and Ethiopia'; and this time the Italo-Ethiopian conflict was given the first place on the agenda.

The proceedings began with Mr. Eden's promised report on the Anglo-Franco-Italian conversations of the 15th-18th August.<sup>1</sup> His account of their failure, which has been quoted above,<sup>2</sup> was not disputed by Monsieur Laval; and the French Prime Minister took occasion to declare that France recognized the binding character of the Covenant; but at the same time he laid more emphasis upon his eagerness to play the conciliator's part than upon his determination to uphold the Covenant if the attempt at conciliation were to fail definitively (an attitude from which he never moved so long as he remained responsible for French foreign policy). Baron Aloisi, who spoke next, confirmed Mr. Eden's report that the Franco-British proposals had been rejected by Italy, and he brushed aside the settlement, that had just been achieved,<sup>3</sup> of the Walwal incident. He presented to the Council a voluminous memorandum setting forth a host of Italian charges against Abyssinia,<sup>4</sup> and he took the line that 'a state such as Ethiopia' could 'have equality neither of rights nor of duties with civilized states', and that, 'although she was granted such equality—and especially seeing that, when it was granted, reliance was placed on her for the future—these' were 'not adequate reasons why the League should persist, to the detriment of the other members of the League, in a mistake made in good faith in 1923'. He declared that 'the Italian Government would be failing in its most elementary duty did it not cease once and for all to place any confidence in Ethiopia, reserving full liberty to adopt any measures that might 'become necessary to ensure the safety of its colonies and to safeguard its own interests'. Monsieur Jèze (representing Ethiopia) thereupon submitted that it was 'an extremely dangerous precedent' to discuss in the Council the way in which a state member of the League was administering its internal affairs, and then to ask 'for a death sentence on account of that administration'. He suggested that Italy had shifted her ground and presented a new accusation because the Walwal incident had now become worthless for her purpose. He begged the Council to examine immediately one capital point: the question whether in a few days a war of extermination would be opened. When, next day (the 5th September), Monsieur

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 173-4, above.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 170, above.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 174, above.

<sup>4</sup> For this memorandum, which has been frequently cited above, see section (iii). The text will be found in *League of Nations Official Journal*, November 1935.

Jèze continued his presentation of the Ethiopian case and declared, apropos of the Italian memorandum, that 'the Italian Government, having resolved to conquer and destroy Ethiopia, begins by giving Ethiopia a bad name', Baron Aloisi rose and left the Council room; and he was followed out, before Monsieur Jèze sat down, by the second Italian delegate, Signor Rocco. This time Monsieur Jèze asked the Council explicitly for prompt action under Article 15, Paragraph 3, of the Covenant, as well as under Article 10.

This meeting of the Council on the 5th September had begun as late as 7 p.m.—all the earlier part of the day having been occupied in strenuous private negotiations in which the Italians had been resisting a proposal to refer the dispute, under Article 15 of the Covenant, to a committee of five. Baron Aloisi objected both to the proposed terms of reference for the committee and to the proposed membership. He did not wish the committee to act under Article 15; and he did not wish either France or Great Britain to serve on it if Italy were not also included. On the other hand, Monsieur Litvinov was reported to have declined an invitation to serve on the proposed committee of five, on the ground that the proposal was a subterfuge for the purpose of enabling the Council to evade its due responsibilities. And, at the short sitting of the Council that evening, at which he was the only speaker besides Monsieur Jèze, he rather strongly criticized the Italian attitude.

Like the great majority of my colleagues, I have to make on this occasion a statement on a question which does not directly affect the interests of our countries, but which may have the gravest consequences for the whole of international life, for the fate of the League of Nations, for the cause of general peace, and consequently, sooner or later, for our own countries. That is why I am bound to declare with regret my inability to agree to the attitude which the representative of Italy wishes us to adopt. It is true that he made no proposals, but the purport of his statement amounts to an invitation to the Council to declare its disinterestedness in the conflict, its indifference, and to pass it by, sanctioning the freedom of action which he requires for his Government, but in this way, while basing his proposal on the non-observance and the violation of its international obligations by the other party to the conflict, he invites the members of the Council to repudiate in their turn their international obligations, to disregard the Covenant of the League of Nations on which, in no little degree, depends the whole edifice of international peace and the security of nations. . . .

Nothing in the Covenant of the League entitles us, however, to discriminate between members of the League as to their internal régime, the colour of their skin, their racial distinctions or the stage of their civilization, nor accordingly to deprive some of them of privileges which they enjoy in virtue of their membership of the League, and, in the first

place, of their inalienable right to integrity and independence. I venture to say that, for the development of backward peoples, for influencing their internal life, for raising them to higher civilization, other means than military may be found.

The private negotiations were continued next day (the 6th September), and eventually the Italian opposition was overcome. Accordingly, at a meeting of the Council which opened that day at 5 p.m., the Council, with the Italian delegate abstaining, appointed a committee of five of its members 'to make a general examination of Italo-Ethiopian relations and to seek for a pacific settlement'. The five countries chosen for service on the committee were the United Kingdom, France, Poland, Spain and Turkey; and the Spanish representative, Señor de Madariaga, was appointed chairman. The committee held eleven meetings in all between the 7th September, 1935, and the 24th, and by the 18th its chairman was able to communicate a scheme to the representatives of Ethiopia and Italy. Before giving an account of the genesis and gist of this scheme, it will be convenient to record the events which were taking place, outside the walls of the committee-room, during the days when the Committee of Five was at work.

At its first meeting, the Committee of Five requested its chairman to inform the two disputants that the committee, 'conscious of its responsibilities for seeking a pacific settlement of the dispute, relied upon the Governments concerned to see that nothing was done which might disturb or endanger its work'. The Ethiopian delegation replied that 'nobody could appreciate the committee's recommendation more highly than that delegation'. On the other hand, Baron Aloisi was reported to have flatly refused, in a personal interview with the chairman of the committee, to give the undertaking asked for. The contrast between the attitudes of the two delegations at Geneva was underlined by pronouncements made at Addis Ababa and at Asmara. At the capital of the Ethiopian Empire on the 6th September the Emperor issued a statement in which he laid down that 'the question of political expediency must not predominate over justice'. At the capital of Eritrea on the 8th, Signor Mussolini's son-in-law Count Ciano—the Italian Minister for the Press and Propaganda, who was now serving in Africa with the Italian Air Force—broadcast in English an address to the American people in which he declared that Italy was 'in any case decided . . . to consider as closed for ever the period of attempts at pacific collaboration with Ethiopia', and that the Italian people were 'ready to assume the gravest responsibilities' should those become necessary.

On the 9th September, at Berlin, a newly appointed Italian Ambassador was officially received by Herr Hitler, and the Ambassador and the Fuhrer exchanged addresses (bearing marks of having been carefully worked out in agreement beforehand) in which some pointed allusions were made to Italo-German co-operation and community of interest. On the 11th, however, at Rome, it was officially denied that the Italian Government had proposed the negotiation of an Italo-German non-aggression pact. It might be inferred that Signor Mussolini wished to frighten France with the bogey of an Italo-German *rapprochement*, but this without driving her to despair. Meanwhile, on the 10th, it was announced in the Fascist Party Order Sheet of the day that, in the near future, there was to be a one-day 'general assembly of the forces of the régime' throughout Italy and her colonies, and that the signal would be given by the ringing of the church-bells, hooting of sirens and rolling of drums. It was against the background of these menacing Italian gestures that the issues raised by the Italo-Abyssinian conflict were discussed at Geneva on the 10th September between Monsieur Laval and Sir Samuel Hoare in private, and were then expounded in public, on the 11th September, in the League Assembly, by the British Secretary of State.

At the time, the Laval-Hoare consultations of the 10th September attracted little public attention, since their purport was not divulged and no hint was given of their actual importance, whereas the imagination of the public was caught and captivated by Sir Samuel Hoare's immediately following pronouncement, with its apparent promise of whole-hearted loyalty to the League Covenant on the British Government's part. The forcefulness of the speech was such as to stifle, for the moment, any uneasy feeling that, in the light of the past policy of the United Kingdom Government, this declaration of faith was too good to be true. If, however, the understanding reached privately on the previous day by Sir Samuel Hoare and Monsieur Laval had been known to the World by the time when Sir Samuel's speech was delivered, that speech might have been read in a rather different sense from the interpretation which its author allowed his world-wide audience to place upon it.

The Laval-Hoare understanding of the 10th September, 1935, was eventually divulged, not by Sir Samuel Hoare, but by Monsieur Laval in statements made to the Chamber of Deputies in Paris on the 17th and the 28th December.

On the 10th September [Monsieur Laval told the Chamber on the latter occasion], I had some conversations at Geneva with Sir Samuel Hoare and Mr. Eden. Conversations about what? We were convinced

that our first effort at conciliation had failed and that hostilities were going to begin almost immediately. We turned all our attention to the question of how the mechanism of collective security should be put into operation. Without waiting for the official meeting of the Council, we discussed and examined—in that spirit of close co-operation which ought always to animate French and British statesmen—the grave situation with which the World was going to be confronted by the Italo-Ethiopian War. We found ourselves instantaneously in agreement upon ruling out military sanctions, not adopting any measure of naval blockade, never contemplating the closure of the Suez Canal—in a word, ruling out everything that might lead to war.

The last sentence here quoted from Monsieur Laval's statement is in some measure misleading because it is incomplete. The whole truth was that in order to coax out of Monsieur Laval a reluctant consent to align himself with his British colleague to the extent of advocating the imposition of an imperfect set of economic sanctions, Sir Samuel Hoare agreed on this occasion to put on one side for the time any consideration of the more drastic measures named in Monsieur Laval's catalogue. Neither on this occasion nor at any time, before or after, during his tenure of office as Foreign Secretary, did Sir Samuel Hoare commit himself, *vis-à-vis* Monsieur Laval, to an undertaking never in any circumstances to contemplate military sanctions<sup>1</sup> (and in this context it may be mentioned, by anticipation, that in regard, likewise, to the subsequent question of imposing an oil sanction, Sir Samuel Hoare kept the same free hand throughout). At the same time, the incompleteness and the misleadingness of

<sup>1</sup> This amendment to Monsieur Laval's account of his agreement with Sir Samuel Hoare on the 10th September, 1935, is borne out by the following question and answer in the House of Commons at Westminster on the 2nd March, 1936:

'Mr. Cocks (Broxtowe, Lab.) asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether any pledges or assurances were given by His Majesty's Government in 1935 to the French Government relative to the attitude to be maintained by this country at Geneva towards the imposition of military sanctions, towards the closing of the Suez Canal, towards any measure which might lead to a blockade, and towards the withdrawal of Ambassadors from Rome, respectively; if so, whether he would give the dates upon which such pledges or assurances were given; and whether they still had binding force.

Viscount Cranborne, Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs (Dorset S., U.).—No pledges or assurances have been given by His Majesty's Government which bind them as to their attitude in the future as regards any of the matters to which the hon. member refers. It was, however, understood between His Majesty's Government and the French Government at Geneva in September last that in their view any collective action to be taken against Italy under Article 16 of the Covenant should, in the first instance, be confined to certain economic and financial measures taken under the first paragraph of that article. His Majesty's Government have repeatedly made it clear that they would not in any event take isolated action. On this point I would refer the hon. member to page 4 of the recent White Paper (*Cmd.* 5072).'



Monsieur Laval's statement are relegated, by the actual subsequent course of events from the 10th September, 1935, onwards, to a plane on which any importance that they may there retain is theoretical rather than factual. For Sir Samuel Hoare's free hand was in fact never used to strike a blow, and from the practical point of view it makes little difference whether the owner of a hand which has done no handiwork has allowed a neighbour to tie the passively offending member behind his back or has himself kept it voluntarily in his pocket. In fact, therefore, Monsieur Laval's statement hits the nail almost accurately on the head; for, on the 10th September, 1935, at Geneva, Monsieur Laval and the two similarly responsible representatives of the Government of the United Kingdom laid down, in free discussion on an equal footing,<sup>1</sup> the bases of a joint Anglo-French foreign policy which from that moment was followed out—by Monsieur Flandin in succession to Monsieur Laval, and by Mr. Eden in succession to Sir Samuel Hoare—until the bitter end of an unchecked war of aggression which reached its military termination, seven months after the opening of hostilities, in a complete military victory of the aggressor over his victim.

It will be seen that the private agreement of the 10th September, and not the public speech of the 11th, was the historic event of which Geneva was the scene in those few days. When Sir Samuel Hoare immediately proceeded to speak, as he did speak, in the League Assembly, and when thereafter Mr. Baldwin and his political associates took this proclamation of loyalty to the League of Nations as the main plank in an electioneering campaign through which they obtained another four or five years' tenure of office, the most charitable account of their conduct would be that they were bluffing, while, on a harsher interpretation, they were deliberately throwing dust in the eyes of the electorate of the United Kingdom and of the Governments and peoples of all the states members of the League whom they persuaded to participate in the imposition of economic sanctions. By comparison with such conduct as this on the part of the Government of the United Kingdom, the conduct of Monsieur Laval was frank and consistent. And it was not open to British Ministers to plead in self-exculpation that no pledge that the United Kingdom would ever go to war in fulfilment of the Covenant was to be found either in Sir Samuel Hoare's speech of the 11th September or in 'the National Parties'' subsequent election-addresses. For both the speech and the

<sup>1</sup> The equality of the footing on which the Anglo-French negotiations were conducted throughout was underlined by Monsieur Laval in the Chamber on the 28th December, 1935.

election-campaign programme created—and were assuredly calculated to create—the impression that, in the Italo-Abyssinian conflict, it was the intention of Mr. Baldwin's Government to fulfil their obligations under the Covenant by doing as many of the things laid down in Article 16 as might be necessary in this case in order to frustrate the aggressor effectively; and it was manifest that, in the circumstances, this measure of fulfilment—which was the least that loyalty demanded—might involve the sanction-taking Powers in that state of war with the aggressor which was explicitly envisaged, in the text of Article 16, as a possible consequence of the Article's application.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In order to complete the foregoing essay in a comparison between the moral merits—or demerits—of Monsieur Laval's conduct and the British Government's, it would be necessary to distinguish the points in which the responsibility of British Ministers was collective from those in which it was individual; and this distinction is difficult to establish without inside knowledge. At the same time, we may perhaps not be in danger of shooting very wide of the mark if we surmise (i) that the text of the speech delivered at Geneva by Sir Samuel Hoare on the 11th September, 1935, had been seen and approved beforehand by Mr. Baldwin in London; (ii) that in taking this ostensibly strong line in championship of the Covenant, Mr. Baldwin and Sir Samuel Hoare were bluffing—*vis-à-vis* Italy and Abyssinia and the rest of the states members of the League—in the sense that they were making a profession of active loyalty to the Covenant without intending to go the whole length (up to and including war) to which the terms of Article 16 actually required and pledged the states members to go in case of this being necessary for the effective fulfilment of the article (thus seems to follow from the words spoken by Mr. Baldwin in the House of Commons at Westminster on the 18th May, 1934, which he recalled and reaffirmed (see p. 450, below) at Wishaw on the 20th June, 1936); (iii) that in playing this rather hazardous game of bluff in the field of foreign policy, both Mr. Baldwin and Sir Samuel Hoare were single-mindedly concerned to give the League of Nations, in its approaching ordeal, the utmost measure of British support which it was possible for a British Government to give on a basis of limited British liability, and that neither of these two statesmen was actuated, in embarking on this adventure in foreign policy, by any intention of making party capital out of it in the field of the domestic politics of the United Kingdom; (iv) that the unexpected popularity and prestige which were reaped at home, as well as abroad, by 'the National Government' in the United Kingdom from the effects of Sir Samuel Hoare's Geneva speech upon public feeling did move the party organizations of the parties collaborating in 'the National Government' to advise Mr. Baldwin that the situation was propitious for a general election, and that representations were made to the Prime Minister from these quarters that this opportunity ought not to be let slip; (v) that Mr. Baldwin acquiesced in this demand from his own political organizers that the popularity of the Government's proclamation of loyalty to the League of Nations should be turned to domestic political account—though he was not himself the originator of this idea, and had not had it in mind at the time when he approved, in advance, the text of his Foreign Secretary's speech; (vi) that before, during, and after the election campaign in the United Kingdom in the autumn of 1935, Mr. Baldwin allowed the electorate (without 'putting them wise') to read a great deal more into Sir Samuel Hoare's speech than the Government intended—not, perhaps, to

It is in the light of these facts, which were not publicly known at the time, that Sir Samuel Hoare's speech of the 11th September must be judged. The text itself need not be summarized here, since it is printed in full in the volume of documents accompanying this *Survey*, while the passage dealing with the possibilities of 'peaceful change' in the matter of raw materials is examined in another part of the companion volume of the *Survey* itself for the year 1935.<sup>1</sup> In this place, it will be sufficient to cite certain passages of the speech which may explain the profound effect which it produced, not only in the Assembly hall, but throughout the World.

We should be shirking our responsibilities . . . if those of us who hold strong views as to the League and its future did not frankly and boldly express them. . . . It is . . . necessary when the League is in a time of real difficulty for the representative of the United Kingdom to state his view and to make it as clear as he can, first, that His Majesty's Government and the British people maintain their support of the League and its ideals as the most effective way of ensuring peace, and, secondly, that this belief in the necessity for preserving the League is our sole interest in the present controversy. No selfish or imperialist motives enter into our minds at all. . . . The ideas enshrined in the Covenant, and in particular the aspiration to establish the rule of law in international affairs, have appealed . . . with growing force to the strain of idealism which has its place in our national character, and they have become a part of our national conscience. . . . The League stands, and my country stands with it, for the collective maintenance of the Covenant in its entirety, and particularly for steady and collective resistance to all acts of unprovoked aggression. The attitude of the British nation in the last few weeks has clearly demonstrated the fact that this is no variable and unreliable sentiment, but a principle of international conduct to which they and their Government hold with firm, enduring and universal persistence. There, then, is the British attitude towards the Covenant. I cannot believe that it will be changed so long as the League remains an effective body and the main bridge between the United Kingdom and the Continent remains intact.

It was these passages, and others in the same vein, that made the dominant impression upon the minds of Sir Samuel Hoare's colleagues in the Assembly, and of his readers everywhere. And while his world-wide audience might be (perhaps unduly) sceptical about his contention that British policy was not influenced in this case by a concern for local British interests in East Africa, and also (perhaps justifiably) sceptical about his further contention that the British Government had never wavered in their support of the League since the day when

convey (on the assumption that they were bluffing), but actually to perform (if and when their bluff should be called).

<sup>1</sup> *Survey for 1935*, vol. i, Part III, section (i) (a).

the Covenant had come into force nearly sixteen years back, his speech did implant a widespread conviction that now, at any rate, the Government at Westminster had made up their minds to stand by their obligations under the Covenant—and this against the threat of an act of aggression on the part of a Great Power—with that courage and that energy which they had conspicuously failed to show in their attitude towards Japan in and after September 1931.

This apparent promise of a courageous and energetic British initiative in the championship of the Covenant in the Italo-Abyssinian dispute was, indeed, qualified by the following passage in Sir Samuel Hoare's speech:

If the burden is to be borne, it must be borne collectively. If risks for peace are to be run, they must be run by all. The security of the many cannot be ensured solely by the efforts of a few, however powerful they may be. On behalf of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, I can say that, in spite of these difficulties, that Government will be second to none in its intention to fulfil, within the measure of its capacity, the obligations which the Covenant lays upon it.

Students of the speech on the morrow of its delivery might be pardoned for missing the possible significance of this proviso, which was indeed neither logically incompatible with the rest of the speech nor unreasonable in itself. They might not guess that, during the coming months, the formula set out in this passage would govern the British Government's policy at least as powerfully as all the rest of the Foreign Secretary's speech put together. And they certainly could not guess that, only the day before, Sir Samuel Hoare had privately agreed with Monsieur Laval to water down, in the Italo-Abyssinian case, the obligations undertaken in Article 16 of the Covenant as far as concerned the initial action, at any rate, of the two strongest and most responsible of the states members of the League whose duty it was to fulfil their covenanted pledges by frustrating the Italian aggressor's assault upon his Abyssinian victim.

It was, therefore, the positive element in Sir Samuel Hoare's speech that evoked an immediate response in the Assembly during the ensuing debate, which lasted from the 11th September to the 14th inclusive. The British Secretary of State's fine words received hearty support from the representatives of Norway, Sweden, Finland, the Netherlands, Portugal, the states members of the Little Entente and the Balkan Entente, Haiti, the Union of South Africa, the Irish Free State<sup>1</sup> and New Zealand, and more cautious support from the repre-

<sup>1</sup> Mr. de Valera's speech—which was distinguished by a characteristic intellectual sincerity and religious fervour—was an act of high political integrity

sentatives of Belgium, Australia, and Canada. Monsieur Litvinov followed a separate road to the same destination. And the most striking result of all was the undisguisedly rueful yet apparently definite rally of Monsieur Laval himself<sup>1</sup> to the support of the Covenant.

France [her Prime Minister declared] is loyal to the Covenant . . . the Covenant is our international law. . . . All our agreements with our friends and with our allies are now concluded through Geneva, or culminate at Geneva. . . . Our obligations are inscribed in the Covenant: France will not shirk them.

At the same time, Monsieur Laval adroitly underlined the application of Sir Samuel Hoare's declaration of faith to other occasions.

Sir Samuel Hoare told us, the day before yesterday, that it was the desire of the United Kingdom to associate itself unreservedly with the system of collective security. He affirmed that this desire was, and would continue to be, the guiding principle of the United Kingdom's international policy. His words have nowhere been received with more satisfaction than in France. No country can better appreciate and determine the scope of such an engagement. The spirit of solidarity in the matter of responsibilities of all kinds, in all circumstances and at all times and places, which is implied for the future by such a statement, marks an epoch in the history of the League. I rejoice at this, and so does my country, which understands the vital necessity of close collaboration with the United Kingdom in defence of peace and for the safeguarding of Europe.

Nor did Monsieur Laval let slip the opportunity of still holding open the door for a direct settlement of the East African question with Italy:

It is not without emotion that, after having signed the Rome agreements, I now speak of the dispute which is weighing so heavily on our Assembly. On the 7th January last, Signor Mussolini and I, acting, not only in the interests of our two countries, but also in that of the peace of Europe, reached a final settlement of all our differences. Conscious of the immense value of the Franco-Italian friendship, I have left nothing undone to prevent any blow to the new policy happily established between France and Italy. At Stresa, together with the delegates of the United Kingdom Government, we found the head of the Italian Government imbued with the same desire and the same will to serve the cause of peace. I know he is prepared to persevere in this collaboration.

and courage, considering the state of the relations between the Irish Free State and the United Kingdom, and the capital which might be made, by Mr. de Valera's enemies in his own household, out of a speech which might, for Irish party purposes, be construed as 'pro-British'.

<sup>1</sup> Monsieur Laval was reported to have been influenced not only by the unexpected resoluteness of Sir Samuel Hoare's speech but also by the pressure of his own colleagues on the French delegation, MM. Herriot and Paul-Boncour.

I need say no more to show how much importance I attach to the maintenance of such solidarity in the interests both of the European community and of general peace. I have spared no effort at conciliation. . . . The task is doubtless a difficult one, but I still do not think it hopeless.<sup>1</sup>

Among the other speakers, Senhor Monteiro (Portugal), Mr. te Water (South Africa), and Monsieur Teclé Hawariate (Ethiopia) deserve quotation.<sup>2</sup>

One passage in Senhor Monteiro's speech was tragically prophetic.

Collective security would be worth little if it did not safeguard the integrity of each national territory and the political independence of all nations; and that against conquest, of course, but also against any decisions not freely accepted. For my part, I must say that there is one thing I loathe even more than war, and that is spoliation by procedure. Collective security must be the guarantee of the free and peaceful exercise of national sovereignty.

Mr. te Water gave a striking exposition of the aspect which the menace of aggression by a European Power against an African country wore in the eyes of another African people.

European nations, and particularly those who are interested in the African Continent, should understand that the people of South Africa are moved deeply by policies which appear to them to be directed once again to the threat of a new partition of Africa by European Powers. . . . European action in Africa leaves always its permanent mark, and how often in the long history of Africa has the mark not become a deeply reacting scar! . . . A partition of Africa, outside the covering blanket of the League, is fraught with danger and menace—danger to the adventuring nations themselves, danger to the Black peoples of Africa, and menace to our own White civilization, now, after centuries of trial and sacrifice, so firmly, and, we believe, beneficently established in Southern Africa. . . . We are facing at this moment the possible destruction . . . of one of the last surviving sovereignties in Africa . . . the capitalization by Europe of the still thinly overlaid war-mindedness, the savage and warlike instincts, of Black Africa—the training of the teeming Black races of Africa for war. . . . If that crime is to be permitted, if Africa is to be conscripted by Europe for its own purposes and designs, armed Africa will, we profoundly believe, in its due and patient time, rise and overthrow, as it has done before, in its long and dark history, and revert to that Black barbarism which it has been our difficult destiny in the South to penetrate and enlighten. . . . And so my Government and the whole people of my country, both Black and White, view with deep

<sup>1</sup> Sir Samuel Hoare, too, for his part, had made a direct personal appeal to Italy in an address broadcast from Geneva on the evening of the 12th September.

<sup>2</sup> Lack of space forbids the addition of quotations from the speech delivered by General Nemours (Haiti), the representative of a country which—as an American Republic whose citizens were of Black African race and of French European culture—had a triple claim to be listened to when it made its voice heard on this occasion.

concern, and with an anxiousness born of the instinctive knowledge of its consequences, the slow and apparently relentless march of the disease of war into our continent. Let it never be forgotten: the long memory of Black Africa never forgets and never forgives an injury or an injustice<sup>1</sup>

Monsieur Teclé Hawariate spoke with a masterly moderation:

I desire first of all to express my deep gratitude to all those members of the League which, in accordance with the Covenant, have guaranteed the territorial integrity and political independence of my country by admitting it to the League of Nations as a member. . . . We are a Christian people with a very old tradition, and we aspire only to live in peace and friendship with the whole World. This people is to-day threatened with a violation of its national integrity. Nevertheless, we, who have been described as 'barbarians', have given manifold proofs of our great toleration, our spirit of patience and our sincere humility. . . . If it is desired to enhance the well-being of Ethiopia, this cannot be done by war. Hearts will not thus be won or union cemented; rather will the coloured races regard warlike action as a threat to their own peculiar culture, and will see their very existence threatened, under the cloak of civilization. Their faith in the civilizing mission of Europe will be destroyed and they will lose their trust in it. . . . The threat not only to [Ethiopia's] security but to its very existence as a nation is growing from hour to hour, and the Ethiopian people is waiting in increasing distress of mind as the fatal moment approaches, and addresses yet more urgently a supreme appeal to the heart of humanity. This appeal it sends out to all men and women of goodwill throughout the World, that they may not allow this great injustice to be done and the soil of Africa to be stained with the blood of their brethren. May peace reign; and may the Ethiopian people be allowed in that peace to collaborate in the development of civilization in Africa, and in working for the establishment of the Kingdom of God on Earth. Such is our supreme desire. Strong in the justice of our intentions, we commend our cause to the sovereign protection of the League of Nations, of which this high Assembly is the supreme expression.

The total effect of this debate in the League Assembly on the 11th-14th September, 1935, was to array the public opinion of the World against the Italian threat of aggression; and on the 14th an Italian counterblast was discharged in the form of a *communiqué* on a meeting between Signor Mussolini and his Cabinet. The Italian Cabinet was 'put on record' (in the American phrase) as reaffirming 'in the most explicit manner that the Italo-Abyssinian problem' did 'not admit of a compromise solution'. Italian preparations in East Africa were announced to be 'proceeding with great intensity', and 'the provision of war supplies . . . at an intensified but regular pace'. A covert threat

<sup>1</sup> Mr. de Water followed Sir Samuel Hoare's example by broadcasting an address from Geneva after the delivery of his speech before the Assembly. Mr. de Water's speech and address were both made on the 13th September.

to the British Empire might perhaps be detected in the news that reinforcements of Italian defences in Libya were in progress: and a defiance of all and sundry breathed in the Duce's assurance that the total of the Italian forces—military, naval and air—was sufficient to meet any threat, from whatever source it might come. Sir Samuel Hoare's and Monsieur Laval's declarations, at Geneva, of loyalty to the Covenant were dismissed as being mere lip-service; but on the other hand Monsieur Laval's reaffirmation, in the same context, of France's friendship with Italy was taken up eagerly.

This friendship Italy intends to develop and to strengthen not only in the interests of the two countries but also in the interests of European co-operation, which cannot be broken by a conflict of a colonial character or by the use of sanctions which were never specified and never applied in far graver previous controversies between members of the League of Nations.

The attitude displayed in this *communiqué* was accentuated in an interview, given by Signor Mussolini to a correspondent of *Le Matin*, which was published on the 17th September.

We have had a sincere and faithful friendship with the British people for many years, but to-day we find it monstrous that a nation which dominates the World refuses us a wretched plot of ground in the African sun. Many times and in every way I have given the assurance to Great Britain that her interests in Abyssinia would be scrupulously safeguarded. But the interests for which she is so strongly opposing us are other interests and she does not say so. . . . It is not a game of poker. . . . We shall go straight ahead. . . . Never from our side will come any hostile act against a European nation. But if one is committed against us—well, it means war. Italy does not want it, but she is not afraid of it. Instead of the losses involved in a colonial policing operation, such as England and France have carried out in turn, does one want millions of dead?

The references to Monsieur Laval, and to France, in these two Italian pronouncements gave rise to a rumour that Monsieur Laval's public pledge, to the states members of the League, of France's loyalty to the Covenant had been qualified by a private pledge to Signor Mussolini that France would not take part in any military sanctions against Italy in any circumstances. It would have startled the World to have learnt that, whatever Monsieur Laval might or might not have promised to Signor Mussolini, Monsieur Laval and Sir Samuel Hoare had actually, both of them, provisionally agreed not to take military sanctions—and this in the form of an understanding with one another!

All this time, the League Council's Committee of Five had been at



work at Geneva; and on the 18th September the chairman communicated to the Ethiopian and Italian representatives a note setting out the basis of a scheme of international assistance for Ethiopia under the League's auspices, together with 'information furnished by the representatives of France and the United Kingdom' which was in fact an integral part of the plan.

The scheme was based on certain opportunities which had already been offered—partly by the Ethiopian Government and partly by the French and British Governments—of going some way towards meeting Italy's complaints (as far as those complaints had ever been made public, and as far as any statement of Italy's ostensible complaints could be taken as evidence of her underlying aims in regard to Abyssinia). On the one hand, Abyssinia had signified her readiness to fall in with the Anglo-French suggestion—made to Italy in the abortive three-Power conversations in August,<sup>1</sup> and reported to the Council by Mr Eden on the 4th September<sup>2</sup>—that, 'as a member of the League of Nations, Ethiopia might appeal to the League for the collaboration and assistance necessary to assure' her 'economic development and administrative reorganization'. In his statement before the Council on the 5th September, Monsieur Jèze had been able to announce that the Ethiopian Government,

having placed its entire confidence in the League and in the Covenant, . . . is ready to hearken to the disinterested counsels which may be given it in carrying out the reforms to which it has set its hand. There are in the League certain bodies whose mission it is to aid the efforts of reforming Governments with their disinterested advice. It is this disinterested advice that the Ethiopian Government asks of the League, with the firm resolve to listen to it and to follow it.

On the other hand, the French and British Governments made a contribution towards the Committee of Five's work by informing the committee that they were ready to make concessions at the expense of their own national interests. They not only signified their willingness to resign to Italy all economic advantages in Abyssinia which the Abyssinian Government might be willing to accord to any foreign Power (with a reservation in favour of 'the recognized interests of France and the United Kingdom under all agreements already in force').<sup>3</sup> They also declared themselves 'ready to facilitate territorial

<sup>1</sup> See p. 174, above

<sup>2</sup> See p. 180, above.

<sup>3</sup> The chief agreements with regard to French and British economic interests in Abyssinia were the Anglo-Abyssinian agreement regarding Lake Tana of the 18th March, 1902; the concession granted by the Emperor Menelik on the 9th March, 1894, to a French company for the construction of the Djibouti-Addis Ababa Railway; the Anglo-Franco-Italian agreement of the 13th December, 1906; and the Anglo-Italian exchange of notes of the 14th-20th

adjustments between Italy and Ethiopia by offering Ethiopia, if necessary, certain sacrifices in the region of the Somaliland coast'. Thus France now associated herself with the proposal which Mr Eden had made to Signor Mussolini, in regard to the western extremity of British Somaliland, in June;<sup>1</sup> and although that British proposal had been curtly rejected by the Italian dictator, it was perhaps conceivable that Signor Mussolini might be willing to consider the exchanges on a larger scale that might have become feasible now that France had consented to add her territorial contribution to Great Britain's.

The text of the Committee of Five's scheme for the administrative reorganization of the Ethiopian Empire need not be summarized here, since it is printed in the accompanying volume of documents.<sup>2</sup> It will be sufficient to observe that the committee drafted its plan in the light of two governing considerations: the obligation of respecting the independence, territorial integrity and security of all states members of the League, and the necessity of ensuring good neighbourly relations between them. The committee did not adopt the Anglo-French suggestion, made to the Italian Government in August, that 'France, the United Kingdom and Italy, as limitrophe Powers, would be particularly well qualified to' act for the League. The committee not only refrained from proposing that the foreign specialists, with whose assistance the reforms in Abyssinia were to be carried out, should be recruited exclusively among British, French and Italian nationals; they also refrained from proposing that the specialists, of whatever nationality they might be, should be representatives of their own respective national Governments. Instead, it was proposed that these specialists should be appointed by the Emperor of Ethiopia on the nomination, or with the endorsement, of a delegate of the League of Nations who was himself to be appointed by the Council of the League with the Emperor's agreement. The original Anglo-French proposal had threatened to have the effect of placing Abyssinia under a three-Power Anglo-Franco-Italian mandate like the three-Power United Kingdom-Australian-New Zealand mandate for Nauru.<sup>3</sup> The Committee of Five's proposal offered Abyssinia international assistance on the same basis as, though of a wider scope than, the assistance which the League had already given to China at the Chinese

December, 1925. The text of the last three of these documents was published in *L'Europe Nouvelle* of the 12th January, 1929 (see also the *Survey for 1929*, pp. 213 *seqq.*, and the present volume, pp. 27, 39-40, 158, 178 *n.*, above).

<sup>1</sup> See p. 160, above.

<sup>2</sup> *Documents on International Affairs, 1935*, vol. ii

<sup>3</sup> See the *Survey for 1926*, pp. 396-7, 400.

Government's own instance;<sup>1</sup> and, on the face of it, the scheme might have been so administered as to meet the two considerations, quoted above, which the committee had taken as its guiding principles. On the other hand, in its practical application this scheme, like any other, would no doubt have been subject to pressure from the Italian side to allow it to be abused for the illegitimate purpose of facilitating an imperialistic Italian penetration of the Ethiopian Empire, and there was at least one suggestion in the scheme that was decidedly ominous from this point of view. The proposed mission of foreign police and gendarmic specialists was to be responsible, among other things, for 'ensuring security in agricultural areas where Europeans may be numerous and where local administration may not be sufficiently developed to provide them with adequate protection'. And this might be read as a device for promoting an Italian colonization of Abyssinia under the League's auspices.<sup>2</sup> In fact, the Committee of Five's scheme, as finally drawn, was reported to have been accepted only with some misgiving, and even repugnance, by the Turkish representative on the committee; and, at a private meeting of the Council which preceded the public meeting on the 26th September, Monsieur Rustu Aras appears to have given voice once more to the objections which he had already expressed in the committee, and to have received support from both Monsieur Titulescu and Monsieur Litvinov.

However, this question of possible flaws in the Committee of Five's scheme never ceased to be an academic question from first to last, since the scheme was rejected by Signor Mussolini as promptly and brusquely as its Anglo-French predecessor. Already, on the 18th, on the strength of the first accounts of the scheme in the press, Signor Mussolini told a representative of *The Daily Mail* that the new proposals were 'not only unacceptable but derisory'.

The suggestion is apparently made that Italy's need for expansion in East Africa should be met by the cession to her of a couple of deserts—one of salt, the other of stone. They are the deserts of Danakil and Ogaden. . . . It looks as if the Committee of the League thinks I am a collector of deserts. I got 110,000 square miles of Saharan desert from the French a little while ago. Do you know how many inhabitants there are in that desolate area? Sixty-two.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See the *Survey for 1931*, pp. 396-7, the *Survey for 1933*, pp. 469-70, 516-17; and the *Survey for 1934*, pp. 648-9, 653, 654, 661.

<sup>2</sup> Indeed, it might plausibly be interpreted as giving the Italians the title to establish an Italian 'national home' in Abyssinia on the analogy of the 'national home' which had been assured to the Jews in Palestine by the terms of the mandate for Palestine which had been conferred on the United Kingdom.

<sup>3</sup> Compare Monsieur Laval's boast to his own countrymen of the valuelessness

Signor Mussolini went on to enlarge upon the diverse blemishes of the two deserts that were being offered to him now, and he also mentioned another consideration which must have weighed with him equally heavily.

In the scheme of an international administration and gendarmerie it seems that Italy is not to be represented at all. The suggestion apparently is that all the 200,000 Italian troops in East Africa should be brought home and told that they have been sent out there for an excursion-trip. That certainly will not be done in any case.

On the 19th Baron Aloisi definitely declined to undertake the mission (no doubt, an unattractive one) of carrying the Committee of Five's note to Rome and laying it before Signor Mussolini in person. That evening, an official spokesman in Rome declared that the scheme was 'quite unacceptable to Italy'; and this announcement was confirmed on the 21st in a *communiqué* stating that the Council of Ministers had taken note of the proposals contained in the report of the Five; that it had examined them carefully, and that, while appreciating the attempt made by the Five, it had decided to consider these proposals as unacceptable, inasmuch as they did not offer a minimum basis sufficient for conclusive realizations which would finally and effectively take into account the rights and the vital interests of Italy. On the 22nd, at Geneva, Baron Aloisi informed Señor de Madariaga that this *communiqué* constituted the Italian Government's answer; and in this interview the Italian delegate 'set forth orally certain observations which explained the attitude taken by the Italian Government in regard to the committee's suggestions'.<sup>1</sup>

The text of the Ethiopian Government's reply<sup>2</sup> was communicated to Señor de Madariaga by Monsieur Teclé Hawariate on the 23rd

of the French territory that he had given away as the price of the Franco-Italian Pact of January 1935 (see the *Survey for 1935*, vol. 1, p. 105).

<sup>1</sup> 'A summary—approved by the delegate of Italy—of these observations' is printed in *League of Nations Official Journal*, November 1935, pp. 1624-5. This summary threw a certain light on Italian aims at the time. For example:

'(1) The Abyssinian state, properly so called, should be placed in such a position that it can do no injury to its neighbours, and its administration should be reformed so as to raise the country to a higher level of civilization.

'(2) The different peoples which are subject to the tyranny of Abyssinia and live on the frontiers of the country under inhuman conditions should be rescued therefrom. . . .

'Instead of considering . . . a proposal [for giving Abyssinia an outlet to the sea] which is not commensurate with the gravity of the situation, the Committee of Five ought to have considered the territorial rights granted to Italy by Article 4, paragraph *b*, of the Tripartite Treaty—i.e. the right to a junction between the Italian Colonies of Eritrea and Somaliland, to the west of Addis Ababa.'

<sup>2</sup> Printed in *op. cit.*, pp. 1625-7.

September. The Ethiopian Government declared that they were willing to open negotiations immediately on the basis of the committee's suggestions and communications, and that they would announce, as the discussions progressed, 'any changes, additions or deletions which' they might 'wish the Council to make in the Committee of Five's suggestions, affecting the nature, objects and machinery of the League's collective international collaboration and assistance'. In the note itself, the Ethiopian Government laid emphasis on the condition that 'the assistance and collaboration of the League must be collective and international, those characteristics being of the essence of the collaboration and assistance given to Ethiopia by the League'. On the 23rd September, 1935, an official spokesman at Addis Ababa told a representative of *The Daily Telegraph*<sup>1</sup> that the only territories which Abyssinia was willing to cede (and this only in return for value received) were the Ogaden and Aussa; that she would agree to the construction of an Italian railway across Abyssinian territory, between Eritrea and Somalia, but this only on the same terms as those accepted by the French in constructing their railway from Djibouti to Addis Ababa; and that the Italian demand for the disarming of Abyssinia could not be entertained at all.

On the 24th September the Committee of Five adopted a report<sup>2</sup> reviewing their work and announcing its failure. On the same day, the British Cabinet met in London (for the first time since the 22nd August) and the Italian Cabinet in Rome; but no new decisions were taken in either capital. Signor Mussolini told his Ministers that Italy had 'presented no counter-proposals at Geneva', and he 'referred to the possibility of a development of the situation on the basis of certain articles in the League Covenant, and to the attitude which Italy' would 'assume according to circumstances'. These were the circumstances in which the Council met in public,<sup>3</sup> to receive the Committee of Five's report, on the 26th September.

At this meeting, at which Baron Aloisi did not present himself, the chairman, Señor Ruiz-Guiñazú, reminded his colleagues that Article 15 of the Covenant had become applicable to the Italo-Abyssinian dispute on the 4th of the month; and he proposed that, in view of the failure of the Committee of Five to achieve a settlement by conciliation, the Council should 'take steps forthwith to draft its report under Article 15, paragraph 4'—without losing sight of the fact that conciliation was still always possible until the Council's

<sup>1</sup> See the *Daily Telegraph*, 24th September, 1935.

<sup>2</sup> Text in *League of Nations Official Journal*, November 1935, pp. 1620-7.

<sup>3</sup> For the antecedent private meeting on the same day, see p. 195, above.

report should have been definitely adopted. He proposed that the draft should be prepared by a committee of the Council consisting of the representatives of all the members with the exception of the parties. After the delivery of short speeches, in support of the chairman, by MM. Eden, Laval, Litvinov and Munch, the proposal from the chair was unanimously adopted; and thereupon the Committee of Thirteen (i.e. of all states represented on the Council except the parties to the dispute) duly set to work to draft the report which it had been commissioned to make. Before the draft was completed, however, the course of events in East Africa put a new complexion upon the situation by adding a fresh chapter to the story. And this chapter may be recounted here in the Committee of Thirteen's own words.

'After the failure of the attempt at conciliation by the Committee of Five, the Council received a telegram from the Emperor of Ethiopia, dated the 25th September, which said that

several months ago we gave orders to our troops along our frontiers to withdraw 30 kilometres from the frontier and to remain there to avoid any incidents that might serve the Italians as a pretext for aggression. The orders have been carried out in full. We remind you of our previous request for the despatch of impartial observers to establish the facts in regard to any aggression or other incident that might occur in order to fix the responsibility therefor. We further ask that the Council should take any other precautions it may think advisable.

'To this telegram, the Committee of Thirteen appointed by the Council on the 26th September replied that, considering with the most careful attention the request for the despatch of impartial observers, it was examining whether the actual circumstances would permit them to discharge their mission.

'At the Council's meeting on the 28th September, the President said that he felt that the telegram from the Emperor of Ethiopia should be officially communicated to the Italian representative for any observations he might think fit to make. It was so communicated on the same day, in the form of a letter from the President of the Council to the Italian representative. No reply [had] yet been received [by the time when the Committee of Thirteen's report was submitted to the Council on the 5th October, 1935].

'On the 28th September, the Emperor of Ethiopia sent a further telegram<sup>1</sup> to the President of the Council. While asserting that Ethiopia would continue to collaborate with the Council for a pacific settlement in accordance with the Covenant, the Emperor drew the

<sup>1</sup> *Documents on International Affairs, 1935, vol. ii.*

Council's most serious attention to the increasing gravity "of the threat of Italian aggression", owing to the continual "despatch of reinforcements and other preparations, despite our pacific attitude". He added that he earnestly begged the Council "to take as soon as possible all precautions against Italian aggression, since the circumstances had become such that we should fail in our duty if we delayed any longer the general mobilization necessary to ensure the defence of our country". The contemplated mobilization would not, he said, affect his previous orders to keep "his troops at a distance from the frontier", and he confirmed his "resolution to co-operate closely with the League of Nations in all circumstances".

'On the 2nd October,<sup>1</sup> the Emperor of Ethiopia informed the Council that Italian troops had violated the Ethiopian frontier in the region south of Mount Mussa Ali, near the frontier of French Somaliland. This region being near the sea and easy of access, the Emperor considered that the Council could obtain confirmation of this violation by sending observers or through the Government of French Somaliland.

'On the 3rd October, the Italian Government replied that no military movement of Italian detachments had taken place in this region, where as a matter of fact the frontier had not yet been delimited.<sup>2</sup>

'On the 3rd October, the Italian Government informed the Council that the warlike and aggressive spirit in Ethiopia had succeeded in imposing war against Italy and had found its latest and complete expression in the order for general mobilization announced by the Emperor on the 28th September. That order, stated the Italian Government, represented a direct and immediate threat to the Italian troops with the aggravating circumstance of the creation of a neutral zone which, in reality, was only a strategic movement intended to facilitate the assembly and the aggressive preparation of the Ethiopian troops. As a result of the order for general mobilization, the continual and sanguinary aggression to which Italy had been subjected in the last ten years manifestly involved grave and immediate dangers against which it was essential for elementary reasons of security to take action without delay. Confronted by this situation, the Italian Government found itself obliged to authorize the High Command in Eritrea to take the necessary measures of defence.<sup>3</sup>

'On the 3rd October, the Ethiopian Government informed the Council that Italian military aeroplanes had, that day, bombarded

<sup>1</sup> *Documents on International Affairs, 1935*, vol. ii.

<sup>2</sup> *op. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> *op. cit.*

Adowa and Addi Grat and that a battle was taking place in the province of Agame. It added that these facts, occurring in Ethiopian territory, involved a violation of the frontiers of the Empire and a breach of the Covenant by Italian aggression.'

These Italian acts in East Africa had been carried out to the accompaniment of words at Rome which underlined the significance of the acts and the intention which lay behind them. 'I have reflected well; I have calculated all; I have weighed everything', Signor Mussolini declared in an interview, given to a special correspondent of *Le Petit Journal*, which was published in that newspaper on the 27th September.<sup>1</sup> And in the *communiqué* on the Duce's report to his Cabinet at a meeting on the 28th it was declared that the Emperor of Abyssinia's order to his troops to retire thirty kilometres' distance from the frontier

cannot be taken seriously by the Italian Government, or by any other Government that deserves the name. This experiment has a strategic objective and not a pacific aim. Its purpose is to mask the preparations in the interior and to dig in on more solid positions. In face of this situation, the departure of our divisions has assumed a more accelerated rhythm in the course of the last few days.

On the 2nd October, 1935, the eve of the day on which the Italian invasion of Abyssinian territory began in East Africa, the long-heralded 'national mobilization' in Italy duly took place; and the dutiful millions met to listen to the recital of a flamboyant manifesto from their leader, of which the following extracts will give some idea:

For months past, the wheel of Destiny has been moving towards its goal under the impulsion of our calm determination; at the present hour, its rhythm is more swift and irresistible than ever. . . . To economic sanctions we shall oppose our discipline, our sobriety, our spirit of sacrifice. To military sanctions we shall reply with military measures. To acts of war we shall reply with acts of war. . . . Proletarian and Fascist Italy, arise! Make the shout of your decision fill the heavens and gladden the heart of the soldiers who are waiting in Africa!

It was under the shadow of these Italian words and acts that the League Council met again at Geneva, to deal with the Italo-Abyssinian

<sup>1</sup> This startling echo, on Signor Mussolini's lips, of the Emperor-King Francis Joseph's proclamation of the 28th July, 1914, to his subjects was doubtless unintentional; and, just for that reason, it would have been seized upon by an Ancient Greek dramatic poet, and would have made his audience shudder at the tragic irony when the fatal words were uttered by the protagonist in the opening act of the new variation upon an ancient plot. The original words of Francis Joseph ran as follows:

'I have examined and weighed everything, and, with a serene conscience, I set out on the path to which my duty points.'



conflict, on the 5th October, 1935. The issue with which the Council was confronted had been sharply defined in a letter which Mr. Eden had sent from Geneva to his constituents in the Warwick and Leamington Division of the United Kingdom:

The issues of the dispute are such as must profoundly interest every one of us. It is not purely a question of a colonial adventure of no real importance, as has been urged in some quarters. It is not a question of the imperialist demand of one Power or another Power in the territory of Abyssinia or elsewhere. It is not even just a question of peace or war in an outlying part of the world. The real issue is whether or not the League of Nations can prove itself an effective instrument in this dispute, and whether its members are prepared to respect and uphold the Covenant. . . . The present dispute is a test case

At this meeting on the 5th October (at which Baron Aloisi was present) the Council sat first in private and then in public. In private session the Council set itself first to complete the Committee of Thirteen's report—which had been distributed before the meeting opened—by adding recommendations for action to the statement of facts, and then proceeded to decide what its own next steps should be. The action incumbent on the Council was suggested by the closing sentence of the statement of facts, which ran: 'Such are the circumstances in which hostilities have broken out between Ethiopia and Italy.' The following sentences were now appended:

Having thus stated the facts of the dispute, the Council should now, in accordance with Article 15 of the Covenant, make known 'the recommendations which are deemed just and proper in regard thereto'.

The facts brought to its knowledge since its last meeting by the two parties make it first and foremost the urgent duty of the Council to draw attention to the obligation of conforming to the provisions of the Covenant. For the time being, the only recommendation which it makes is that any violation of the Covenant should immediately be brought to an end.

The Council reserves the right to make subsequently such other recommendations as it may consider advisable.

At the same time it was agreed that a vote on the report should not be taken till the 7th, but that in the meantime the Council should examine the information which it had received with regard to further developments since its last discussion of the Italo-Abyssinian dispute on the 26th September. 'After hearing any observations or statements which the members' might 'desire to make on these various points, the Council would, with a view to an examination of those statements, set up a committee of six members which would study the situation and report to the Council not later than the afternoon of the 7th, in order that the latter' might 'take its decisions with a

full knowledge of the facts. The committee would be composed as follows: United Kingdom, Chile, Denmark, France, Portugal, Rumania'. This procedure was announced, in the terms just quoted, at the beginning of the public session of the Council on the 5th October, by the Secretary-General on the chairman's behalf.

At the public session the chairman first threw the meeting open for a discussion of the Committee of Thirteen's report; and on this topic the only speakers were the representatives of Italy and Abyssinia, since all other members of the Council had been represented on the committee. On this point in the agenda Baron Aloisi and Monsieur Teclé Hawariate each simply reserved his observations until he and his Government should have had time to study the document. The chairman then threw the meeting open for a discussion on the information received since the 26th; and this time, again, it was Baron Aloisi and Monsieur Teclé Hawariate who spoke.

Baron Aloisi's thesis was that the Italian invasion of Abyssinia was 'quite legitimate' and 'even within the framework of the Covenant', as it was 'merely an immediate and necessary reply to an act of provocation'. The act to which Baron Aloisi referred was the Abyssinian mobilization on the 28th September, and his argument was manifestly double-edged; for, on the same showing, the Abyssinians would have been justified in invading Eritrea and Somalia at any time since February when the stream of Italian troops and military supplies had begun to pour into these two territories adjoining the Abyssinian frontiers. 'No state', the Emperor of Ethiopia might have pleaded in Baron Aloisi's words, 'could ever disregard the requirements of military security of that kind.' For the rest, Baron Aloisi restated the paradoxical proposition that the Emperor's withdrawal of his troops thirty kilometres behind the frontier was the acme of Ethiopian menace and provocation; and he also re-trod much of the ground which had been traversed already in his own conversation with Señor de Madariaga on the 22nd September and in the Italian memorandum<sup>1</sup> which had been presented to the Council on the 4th September.

Monsieur Teclé Hawariate began by declaring that Ethiopia renewed 'its oft repeated request to the Council to apply the provisions of the Covenant'. The essential passage in his speech ran as follows:

For six months Italy, despite her declarations in favour of a pacific settlement and despite the agreement to arbitrate, has not ceased to send large quantities of troops, arms and implements of war, thus preparing for the aggression which she had resolved to launch when the rainy

<sup>1</sup> See p. 180, above.

season should be over. Despite this threat, the Ethiopian Government delayed the general mobilization of its forces until the last moment. Before issuing the final order, the Ethiopian Government asked the Council to take the precautionary measures which would dispense it from calling up the whole people to defend the threatened territory. Only when the Italian aggression took place was the mobilization order published with the traditional ceremonies necessary for its execution.

It is therefore without any justification, and without being able to invoke any reasonable pretext, that the Italian Government, applying a programme decided upon long in advance, sent its troops across the Ethiopian frontiers, bombarded defenceless towns and inhabited areas, and massacred an innocent population.

The Ethiopian Government respectfully but firmly asks the Council to declare:

(1) That these indisputable facts constitute resort to war by Italy within the meaning of Article 16 of the Covenant;

(2) That this resort to war has, *ipso facto*, brought about the consequences laid down in Article 16, paragraph 1.

Lastly, the Ethiopian Government respectfully asks the Council to fulfil the duty devolving upon it under Article 16, paragraph 2, and to put an end, as soon as possible, to the hostilities which have just begun in defiance of law and of the most solemn obligations.

After the delivery of these two speeches, the Council adopted a proposal from the chair that the Committee of Six—with the membership and the terms of reference that had been announced at the opening of the public session<sup>1</sup>—should be appointed forthwith, with instructions to report not later than the afternoon of the 7th. The Council also adopted a proposal, made by Mr. Eden, that the Committee of Six should get to work ‘almost at once to-night’. Before the session of the Council ended, the chairman announced that the President of the Assembly had summoned the Assembly—which had merely adjourned instead of closing on the 28th September<sup>2</sup>—to meet on the 9th October at 4 p.m.

The Council, when it reassembled at 4 p.m. on the 7th October, had before it, this time, not only the report of the Committee of Thirteen but also the report of the Committee of Six<sup>3</sup> which had been appointed on the 5th. The latter report began by formulating the questions which it had been asked by the Council to answer:

(1) Does a state of war exist between Italy and Ethiopia?

(2) If so, has the war been resorted to in disregard of Articles 12, 13 and 15 of the Covenant?

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 201-2, above.

<sup>2</sup> The circumstances in which this decision had been taken by the Assembly were recapitulated with great precision and lucidity by the President of the Assembly, Dr. Beneš, at the opening of the meeting on the 9th October.

<sup>3</sup> Text in *League of Nations Official Journal*, November 1935, pp. 1223-5.

It then proceeded to collect and classify a number of facts, on the basis of which it answered both questions in the affirmative. Of the seven juridical points on which the affirmative answer to the second question was based, the last four were as follows:

(d) Without prejudice to the other limitations to their right to have recourse to war, the members of the League are not entitled, without having first complied with the provisions of Articles 12, 13 and 15, to seek a remedy by war for grievances they consider they have against other members of the League. The adoption by a state of measures of security on its own territory and within the limits of its international agreements does not authorize another state to consider itself free from its obligations under the Covenant.

(e) The Pact of Paris of the 27th August, 1928, to which Italy and Ethiopia are parties, also condemns 'recourse to war for the solution of international controversies' and binds the parties to the Pact to seek by pacific means 'the settlement or solution of all disputes or conflicts, of whatever nature or of whatever origin they may be, which may arise among them'.

(f) The Ethiopian Government, at the meeting of the Council on the 5th October, invoked Article 16 of the Covenant. Under the terms of that article, 'should any member of the League resort to war in disregard of its covenants under Articles 12, 13 or 15, it shall *ipso facto* be deemed to have committed an act of war against all other members of the League. . . .

(g) When a member of the League invokes Article 16 of the Covenant, each of the other members is bound to consider the circumstances of the particular case. It is not necessary that war should have been formally declared for Article 16 to be applicable.

The ultimate finding of the Committee of Six was as succinct as it was momentous.

After an examination of the facts stated above, the Committee has come to the conclusion that the Italian Government has resorted to war in disregard of its covenants under Article 12 of the Covenant of the League of Nations.

With this document, as well as the Committee of Thirteen's report, before it, the Council began its meeting on the 7th October by sitting in private; and at this private session the chairman announced that he proposed, in the public session which was to follow, to take a vote on both reports, and also to consider the question of calling upon the two parties to stop hostilities. Thereupon Baron Aloisi asked that the consideration of the report of the Committee of Six should be postponed to the following day; and when the chairman suggested that this request should be considered by the Council in a private meeting, in the absence of the two parties, Baron Aloisi claimed the right to be present, while Monsieur Tecle Hawariate declared that he

objected to any adjournment whatever. Señor de Madariaga then proposed that Baron Aloisi's request for an adjournment should be discussed, without the parties being present, 'at a small meeting which might be informal—not even an actual meeting of the Council', while Mr. Eden made a counter-proposal that 'any discussion as to whether or not any part of' the agenda, now before the Council, 'should be adjourned' was 'one that should take place in public session'. The chairman ruled that there should be an exchange of views between the members of the Council other than the representatives of the parties. Accordingly the meeting was suspended; but in the private discussion, which followed, between the Thirteen, Baron Aloisi's request for an adjournment did not find favour; and, when the private session of the Council was resumed, the chairman made the following announcement.

The report of the Committee which is before the Council describes facts from official sources and draws attention to the provisions of the Covenant. To-day, the 7th October, five days after the opening of hostilities, the establishment of the existence of a state of war, in relation to the obligations of the Covenant, compels the members of the Council to face their responsibilities. This obligation does not in any way prejudice the rights of the parties to make known their observations subsequently at another meeting of the Council. However anxious the members of the Council may be courteously to take account of the convenience of one of their colleagues, they cannot allow that anxiety to take precedence over a primary duty. I take note of the protest made by the representative of Italy and, in the name of the Council, I declare as its President and as its mandatory—with, therefore, the unanimous consent of my colleagues other than the parties—that the members of the Council will be called upon at to-day's meeting to state their views as to the conclusions of the Council Committee and that the Council will hear the representative of Italy, should he so desire, at another meeting.

Baron Aloisi reiterated his protest, and thereupon the Council adopted, over his head, the agenda for the public session in the terms originally announced.

At the public session, which followed immediately, the proceedings began with speeches from Baron Aloisi and Monsieur Tecle Hawariate on the report of the Committee of Thirteen. Baron Aloisi stated that the Italian Government did not consider that they had violated the Covenant in any way. Monsieur Tecle Hawariate stated that the Ethiopian Government declared themselves in complete agreement with the Committee of Thirteen as regarded the statement of facts, the circumstances of the dispute, and the legal considerations put forward by the committee. After this, the chairman took a roll-call of votes for

and against the adoption of the Committee of Thirteen's report—first from the representatives of the members of the Council other than the parties, and then from the Ethiopian and Italian delegates, whose votes did not count in calculating unanimity. The report was adopted unanimously—the only adverse vote cast being Baron Aloisi's own.

The Council then took up the report of the Committee of Six; and, after the text had been recited by the chairman of the committee, Senhor Monteiro (Portugal), the same procedure was followed, with the same result, as in dealing with the report of the Committee of Thirteen. This report, too, was accepted—the members of the Council, other than the parties, voting, without exception, in the affirmative, while, once again, the sole adverse vote was cast by Baron Aloisi.<sup>1</sup> The meeting then closed with the following statement from the chairman:

I take note that fourteen members of the League of Nations represented on the Council consider that we are in presence of a war begun in disregard of the obligations of Article 12 of the Covenant. Accordingly the report of the Council Committee and the minutes of the present meeting will be sent to all the members of the League of Nations. As the Assembly stated in its resolution of the 4th October, 1921, 'the fulfilment of their duties under Article 16 is required from the members of the League by the express terms of the Covenant, and they cannot neglect them without a breach of their treaty obligations'. The Council has now to assume its duty of co-ordination in regard to the measures to be taken. Since the Assembly of the League of Nations is convened for the day after to-morrow, the 9th October, 1935, my colleagues will doubtless feel it desirable to associate the Assembly with their task. The report of the Council Committee and the minutes of the present meeting will therefore be communicated to the President of the Assembly.

Thus, for the first time, the members of the Council of the League of Nations had declared a state member of the League—and this one of the Great Powers—to be an 'aggressor' in terms which would oblige every state member which concurred in the finding to apply against the declared aggressor the 'sanctions' prescribed in Article 16 of the Covenant. For the Italian Government, this was a heavy blow; for the Italians appear to have hoped, until a late hour, that the requisite unanimity among the Council members other than the parties would

<sup>1</sup> Strictly speaking, Baron Aloisi did not cast a vote, as he had declined to accept the procedure. His words were: 'While making every reservation as to the procedure which is now being followed, I state, for all useful purposes, that I do not approve the conclusions of the report.' In a subsequent letter to the Secretary-General Baron Aloisi declined to avail himself of the opportunities, which the Council had been prepared to give him, of stating his case at a meeting of the Council on the 8th.

not be forthcoming. In particular, they appear to have expected that, even if France voted against Italy rather than risk a breach with Great Britain and with the friends and allies of France in Eastern Europe, Poland, at any rate, might be induced to take Italy's side in view of the distaste which the Poles had shown, on recent occasions,<sup>1</sup> for international shackles upon the exercise of national sovereignty. On the eve of the decision at Geneva, pointed gestures of amity towards Poland had been made on the Italian side; but if Italy had indeed counted on Poland's support, her expectations were disappointed when it came to the voting on the 7th October by the Council.

Italy, however, might still hope something from the forthcoming meeting of the Assembly; for she knew that, in this larger forum, the formidable unanimity with which she was now confronted on the Council would be broken by at least three dissentient voices (those of Austria, Hungary and Albania); and it was worth Italy's while to take the best advantage that she could of this support in the Assembly—slight though it might be—since, for several reasons, the action which the Assembly collectively, or its members individually, might now take, or abstain from taking, was a matter of practical importance. In the first place, the finding of the Committee of Six—that Italy had resorted to war in disregard of her covenants under Article 12 of the Covenant—had not been adopted by the Council as such, but had simply received the assent of fourteen states members of the League represented on the Council (i.e. thirteen members of the Council, together with Abyssinia).<sup>2</sup> In the second place, even if the Council, as such, had adopted a report to the effect that a state member had broken one of those covenants the breach of which would bring Article 16 of the Covenant into play, it would still have been both the right and the duty of all states members not represented on the Council to make up their minds for themselves whether a breach of the Covenant had taken place.<sup>3</sup> In the third place, the economic

<sup>1</sup> See the *Survey for 1933*, pp. 218-19, the *Survey for 1934*, pp. 395-8, and the *Survey for 1935*, vol. i, p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> This was the technical effect of the taking of a vote by a roll-call of the individual members of the Council, as distinct from the taking of a decision by the Council as a body. In the *Official Journal* of the League of Nations, it was recorded, apropos of the results of the vote by roll-call on the report of the Committee of Six, that 'the members of the Council, other than the parties, consulted by roll-call, declared themselves in agreement with the conclusions of the report'. On the other hand, in the same *Journal*, the report of the Committee of Thirteen was recorded to have been 'adopted unanimously', though the same procedure of voting by roll-call had been followed in this case likewise.

<sup>3</sup> This right and duty of each state member of the League individually to judge, upon the outbreak of any war in which any other state member was

sanctions which, if Article 16 were deemed to have come into play, were at once automatically obligatory upon all states members,<sup>1</sup> would depend for their practical effectiveness upon the concerted participation of the largest attainable number of states members.<sup>2</sup>

For these reasons, the opening of the public session of the Assembly at 6 p.m. on the 9th October was preceded by a stubborn contest on the General Committee and in private conversations behind the scenes. Baron Aloisi, with the votes of Italy's three satellites in his pocket, appears to have contended that the finding of the Council (or, rather, of fourteen states represented on the Council) required endorsement by the Assembly, and that the Assembly's vote must be unanimous in order to be effective. This Italian thesis, however, did not prevail.

In opening the public session of the Assembly on the 9th October the President, Dr. Beneš, first reminded his colleagues of the circumstances in which he had adjourned the Assembly on the 28th September and had afterwards convened it for the present meeting. He then recited to the Assembly a letter, dated the 8th October, from the chairman of the Council, communicating the report of the Committee of Six and the minutes of the Council meeting of the 7th October, in accordance with the chairman of the Council's closing statement<sup>3</sup> on

involved, whether one of the belligerents had resorted to war in contravention of Article 12 or 13 or 15 of the Covenant—a contravention which, if ascertained, would oblige the state passing judgment to take action against the aggressor-belligerent in accordance with its covenants under Article 16—was a right and duty which was inherent in the terms of Article 16 itself. This interpretation of Article 16 was confirmed in the fourth of the Assembly resolutions of the 4th October, 1921 (a resolution of which the chairman of the Council had quoted the second sentence in his closing statement (see p. 206, above) on the 7th October, 1935). The first sentence ran as follows: 'It is the duty of each member of the League to decide for itself whether a breach of the Covenant has been committed.' The Assembly resolutions of the 4th October, 1921, had never become binding upon states members, but, as was proposed in the first of them, they were taken as 'rules for guidance' in the application of the terms of the Covenant to the action of the states members of the League in the Italo-Abyssinian conflict.

<sup>1</sup> In contrast to the military sanctions of Article 16, which were only obligatory in the event of less drastic measures proving insufficient for the fulfilment of the obligation of states members to frustrate an act of aggression effectively.

<sup>2</sup> In contrast to the practical conditions for the efficacy of military sanctions, which might still prove efficacious even if they were put into force by Council members only, since the Council included *ex officio* all the Great Powers that belonged to the League. In the Italian case, Italy's war of aggression could have been stopped dead at any moment by the concerted naval action of the United Kingdom and France alone, if they had decided to blockade, against Italian shipping, the maritime approaches to the Suez Canal.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 206, above.



the last-mentioned occasion (a passage which Dr. Beneš also recited). Dr. Beneš then reminded the Assembly that it was entitled, under the actual provisions of the Covenant, to deal with any matter within the sphere of action of the League or affecting the peace of the World, and that it was also free to determine its own procedure; but he suggested that, as the Assembly was still in ordinary session, it should follow strictly its ordinary rules of procedure; and he pointed out that these rules required a special vote, by a majority of not less than two-thirds, in the first place to put an additional item on the agenda, and in the second place to deal with such an additional item immediately (instead of referring it to a committee for report after a four days' delay). The two necessary motions were successively put to the vote and were carried by the requisite majority in either case; and thereupon—the Council's communication being now, in due form, under the consideration of the Assembly—the President set out his conception of the Assembly's task and his intentions in regard to the procedure by which this task was to be fulfilled.

1. The dispute between Italy and Ethiopia has not ceased to be under consideration by the Council. The Assembly is not taking the place of the Council in this matter.

2. The Assembly is not resuming the examination of the question or the procedure under Article 15 which was followed in the Council and led to the adoption of a report

3. The members of the Assembly have an opportunity of stating their position with regard to the proceedings that have taken place in the Council during the last few days—that is to say with regard to the documents communicated to us by the President of the Council.

The minutes of the Council meeting at which the Governments represented expressed their views on the grave events in Ethiopia have been sent urgently to all Governments members of the League. The members of the Assembly are invited to express an opinion.

What is required is the assent of each Government individually. We are not going to propose a vote.

I shall give to those who desire to express a contrary view an opportunity to speak.

Similarly, any delegations desiring to place on record their abstention or reservations will also be given an opportunity to do so. But I shall interpret the silence of the rest as implying the concurrence of their Governments in the opinion already expressed by fourteen members of the Council. Moreover, they will, of course, be entirely free to express their views on this subject from the platform of the Assembly.

To keep the discussion clear, I may add that statements regarding practical difficulties which certain Governments might experience in the application of Article 16 can be properly made in the co-ordinating body which the Council is inviting us to set up.

4. The President of the Council having expressed the desire of the

members of the Council that the Assembly should be associated with it in connexion with the measures to be taken, the Assembly will have the important task of dealing with this question and of taking such decisions as may be required ; such as, for instance, the setting-up of a co-ordinating body and the definition of its terms of reference.

The only two delegates who took, at this session of the Assembly on the 9th October, the opportunity, offered by the President of the Assembly, of declaring their dissent from the findings of the fourteen states represented on the Council were the representatives, in the Assembly, of Austria and Hungary. In different tones—the Austrian rather deprecatory and the Hungarian rather truculent—Herr Pflügl and Monsieur de Velics dissociated themselves from the tacit judgment of their colleagues on identical grounds: the political ground of friendship with Italy and the economic ground of inability to make the sacrifices of trade with Italy which would be involved in the application of sanctions against her on their part.

In the continuation of the debate in the Assembly on the 10th October, the first speaker was Baron Aloisi. He began by putting on record his objection to the procedure that was being followed ; he then went on to state the Italian case on lines which by this time were familiar ; and he closed with the following peroration :

War, let me tell you, is not suppressed ; it is replaced. And it is replaced because history does not stand still. If, for its part, the League of Nations stands still, history, which cannot be forced by the application of sanctions, will continue on its way, for its way is the way of life. To proclaim in words the desire to eliminate conflicts is a mere logomachy. The real policy is to remove the causes. . . .

Caught as she is in the tide of her full spiritual and material development, but confined by historical vicissitudes and international restrictions within territorial limits which are stifling her, Italy is the country which must make her voice heard in this Assembly of the states as the voice of the proletariat calling for justice.

After this, the President took up the question of procedure, which the Italian delegate had raised, and obtained from the Assembly a confirmation of the procedure which was being followed. He then declared, once again, that silence was being taken as assent to the findings of the Fourteen ; and, having closed the discussion for the purpose of declaring dissent, he opened it for the purpose of a general debate.

In this debate, which occupied the 10th and 11th October, there were sixteen speakers,<sup>1</sup> apart from the President himself. Of these,

<sup>1</sup> Not counting the interventions of Baron Aloisi, Monsieur de Velics and Herr Pflügl on the afternoon of the 10th October on the subject of the setting up of a Co-ordination Committee (for which, see pp. 213-14, below).

the last, who was the representative of Albania, was the only one to follow the example of the Austrian and Hungarian delegates in announcing a refusal to take part in the application of sanctions against Italy. One other, however, namely the representative of Switzerland, Monsieur Motta, made a reservation in this regard. While assuring his colleagues that the Swiss Confederation would 'not fail in its duty of solidarity with the other members of the League', he submitted that the status of the Confederation, in so far as its external relations were concerned, continued to be governed by the principle of neutrality, and that consequently Switzerland's obligation to take part in economic and financial sanctions was not absolute.

We do not consider ourselves bound to take part in sanctions which, by their nature and effect, would expose our neutrality to real dangers—dangers which we must judge in the full exercise of our sovereignty.

Among the other speakers, Mr Eden called for action in the name of humanity:

Since it is our duty to take action, it is essential that such action should be prompt. That is the League's responsibility—a responsibility based on humanity, for we cannot forget that war is at this moment actually in progress.

Monsieur Potemkin, the representative of the Soviet Union, touched upon Monsieur Litvinov's theme of the indivisibility of peace:

Unity of action will constitute the most effective means of settling a conflict which has had its source in a desire for colonial expansion, which infringes the territorial integrity and national independence of a member of the League and which constitutes a threat to Mankind. This unity of action will serve as an earnest of the necessary realization of collective security, of the system which will put a check on all future attempts—from whatever quarter they may come—to disturb peace by attacks on the World's most crucial spots.

General Nemours (Haiti) protested, on grounds of both expediency and ethics, against Signor Mussolini's attempt to draw a distinction between a colonial and a European war:

The precedent which we are going to set up to-day will be used to-morrow. There are not two truths—one for Africa and the other for Europe. On either side of the Mediterranean aggression must be defined in the same way. The same bombs, the same shells produce the same effects, and whether the dead and wounded be black or white, the same red blood flows from their wounds.

The reply that may possibly be given is that this is not the same kind of war—that it is a colonial war. But on what is this difference to be based? Between two equal members of the same association, both of whom have solemnly entered into an undertaking to respect all its articles, there can be no question of establishing, at the bidding of one

of its members, a distinction which has never existed. What article of our Covenant, for example, after defining the aggressor, explains away his action by minimizing its importance on the grounds that it is a colonial war? Where is there any reference to a difference between a war breaking out in Africa and a war breaking out in Europe? And how is a war that breaks out in America to be defined?

At the conclusion of the debate on the 11th, the response of the states members of the Assembly to the findings of fourteen states represented on the Council was announced by the President as follows:

The minutes of the Council's meeting of the 7th October, 1935, and the report of the Council Committee concerning the events in Ethiopia, noting that there has been a resort to war in disregard of engagements under Article 12 of the Covenant—which report fourteen members of the Council approved—were communicated by the President of the Council to the President of the Assembly. They were submitted to the Assembly, which has considered them at its last three meetings. Of the fifty-four members present at the Assembly, three states expressed a contrary opinion, a fourth, this morning, has spoken against the application of sanctions, and fifty states members of the League have expressed an opinion in accordance with that of the fourteen states members of the Council, by conveying, either explicitly by their declarations or tacitly, their Government's acquiescence in the report and documents in question.

Before the termination of the sitting on the 11th, the Assembly decided once again not to close its sixteenth ordinary session, but simply to adjourn and thereby to leave it in the President's power to convene a further meeting at short notice if this should prove desirable.

The steps taken by the Assembly on the 10th October, before its adjournment on the 11th, to bring into being a Co-ordination Committee, for dealing with the application of sanctions, are recorded in the following chapter.

#### (vi) The Imposition of Economic Sanctions upon Italy (11th October—12th December, 1935)

'The question of the co-ordination of the measures to be taken under Article 16 . . . was brought up in the Assembly by the fact of the President of the Council having transmitted to the President of the Assembly the minutes of the Council's meeting of the 7th October, 1935.<sup>1</sup> Definite action in this matter was proposed in the General Committee of the Assembly on the afternoon of the 10th October by the representatives of the Scandinavian countries, who were supported

<sup>1</sup> Statement by Dr. Beneš in the Assembly on the 11th October, 1935.

by MM Laval and Eden, while Baron Aloisi abstained from taking part in the discussion. At the plenary meeting of the Assembly on the same afternoon a draft resolution, recommended by the General Committee, was laid before the Assembly by the President in the following terms

The Assembly,

Having taken cognizance of the opinions expressed by the members of the Council at the Council's meeting of the 7th October, 1935;

Taking into consideration the obligations which rest upon the members of the League in virtue of Article 16 of the Covenant and the desirability of co-ordination of the measures which they may severally contemplate:

Invites the members of the League (other than the parties) to set up a committee, composed of one delegate, assisted by experts, for each member, to consider and facilitate the co-ordination of such measures and, if necessary, draw the attention of the Council or the Assembly to situations requiring to be examined by them.

In presenting the resolution, the President pointed out that the organ which the members of the League were being invited to set up was not an organ either of the Assembly or of the Council, but was a conference of states members meeting to consult together with a view to the application of the provisions of Article 16. He afterwards added that the text was not a resolution of the Assembly in the strict sense of the word, but an invitation addressed by the Assembly to the states members of the League.

Before this text was put to the vote, Baron Aloisi expressed an objection on the grounds that 'no decision' had 'as yet been taken by any competent organ of the League of Nations to the effect that a case covered by Article 16 had arisen', and that in consequence the proposed committee could not be regarded as in any sense an organ of the League. Both these points were answered by Dr. Beneš. In regard to the first, he pointed out that

No organ of the League has power to decide, in such a way as to bind all the members, that one of them has violated the Covenant. That obligation derives directly from the Covenant, and must be observed by members of the League in virtue of the respect due to treaties. This was in fact placed on record by the fourteen members of the Council at the meeting of the 7th October, and is recorded in the minutes which have been transmitted to us and which I have laid before you.

On the second point, Dr. Beneš confirmed his own previous declaration that the text on which a vote was to be taken did not constitute a formal resolution of the Assembly, and that therefore the question of a majority vote or unanimity vote did not arise. In order to make the nature of the text clear beyond all possibility of mistake, he then

substituted the word 'recommends' for the word 'invites' at the beginning of the third paragraph of the draft; and in this amended form the draft text was adopted by all states members of the League which were represented at the meeting, save for a single adverse vote (on the part of the Italian representative) and two abstentions (on the part of the representatives of Hungary and Austria)<sup>1</sup>

The Co-ordination Committee which fifty states members of the League had thus recommended themselves to set up lost no time in getting to work. Its first meeting opened at 10.30 a.m. on the 11th October, 1935; and this first meeting was attended by the representatives of fifty-two states.<sup>2</sup>

Before proceeding to record the Co-ordination Committee's acts, it may be pointed out that the setting up of such a body for such a purpose was not suggested—and *à fortiori* was not made obligatory—by the terms of the Covenant, and that, conversely, the fact that such a body was now set up in this particular case could not, and did not, release the states members of the League, either jointly or severally, from any of the obligations which they had taken upon themselves in subscribing to the Covenant.<sup>3</sup> In Article 16, the only provision for the co-ordination of sanctions was with respect to the contingently obligatory<sup>4</sup> military sanctions, and not with respect to

<sup>1</sup> Albania was not represented at this sitting, and there were five other states members, out of the fifty-nine, which were not represented at the sixteenth Assembly at all (that is to say, Germany—whose membership was on the point of expiring—Dominica, Guatemala, Paraguay and Salvador). The recommendation that a Co-ordination Committee should be set up was thus voted by fifty states members.

<sup>2</sup> Five of the fifty-nine states members of the League were not represented at the sixteenth Assembly (see the preceding footnote), and the two parties to the Italo-Abyssinian conflict were excluded *ex officio* from membership of the Committee. On the other hand, the representatives of the three states Austria, Hungary and Albania—which had declared their dissent from the findings of the fourteen states represented on the Council put in an appearance at the first meeting of the Co-ordination Committee.

<sup>3</sup> 'If the resolutions of 1921 are directed to securing the execution of the obligations of Article 16 in a practical and reasonable way and as far as possible by pacific methods, they do nothing to weaken the essential obligation of the Article, which is to prevent the success of an illegitimate resort to war by a member of the League. If, in the practical application of the Article, this essential obligation is not fulfilled, then, as against a complaint by a state which suffers by that failure, the resolutions of 1921 do not afford a defence, nor is it open, it is hardly necessary to add, even to all the other members of the League, after events requiring the fulfilment of the obligation have taken place, to "interpret" that obligation away.'—Sir John Fischer Williams: 'Sanctions under the Covenant', in *The British Year Book of International Law*, 1936.

<sup>4</sup> "Contingently obligatory" (if it be not a contradiction in terms) would appear to be more accurate than "optional" as a descriptive epithet for the military sanctions envisaged in Article 16 of the Covenant, since the measures

the immediately obligatory economic sanctions; and here the co-ordinating body, which was to make recommendations to the states members, was the Council itself (Article 16, paragraph 2), and not any *ad hoc* committee. The proposal to set up an *ad hoc* Co-ordination Committee to deal with economic sanctions appeared for the first time in the seventh of the Assembly resolutions of the 4th October, 1921; and, as has been mentioned above,<sup>1</sup> these resolutions had never become binding upon states members. In consequence, states members were not entitled to benefit by the suggestions made in Resolutions Eight to Fourteen of the 1921 series.<sup>2</sup>

The purport of these resolutions was to confer upon the Council, acting through a Co-ordination Committee, a discretion in regard to the imposition of economic sanctions which would have been analogous to the discretion which the Covenant itself did expressly confer upon the Council, in Article 16, paragraph 2, in regard to the imposition of military sanctions. The resolutions in question contemplated that the Council, acting through a Co-ordination Committee, might at least temporarily exempt certain states members, either wholly or partially, from duties, in the application of economic sanctions, which would be exacted from other states members at once and in full; and it was also contemplated that the severance of intercourse with the Covenant-breaking state, to which all states members were pledged under Article 16, paragraph 1, might be carried out by stages (instead of *in toto* immediately, as Article 16, paragraph 1, prescribed); and further that the common plan of economic action, which was to be recommended by the Council, might stop short—even at its final turn of the screw—of that complete severance of economic intercourse which the Covenant made obligatory.

In the event, the states members of the League, in setting up a Co-ordination Committee on the 10th October, 1935, and thereafter the Co-ordination Committee itself and its derivative the Committee of Eighteen,<sup>3</sup> in recommending the application of particular economic sanctions, acted throughout almost as though the Assembly Resolutions of the 4th October, 1921, and not the Covenant, had been the legal instrument that was binding upon them.<sup>4</sup> Above all, they acted

that *must* be taken may well result in a compulsion to take the measures which, so far as the text goes, only *may* be taken<sup>1</sup>. Sir John Fischer Williams in *op. cit.*

<sup>1</sup> See p. 208, footnote.

<sup>2</sup> The legal position of the 1921 resolutions in 1935 is discussed by Sir John Fischer Williams in *op. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> See p. 222, below.

<sup>4</sup> It was, however, made abundantly clear, at the first meeting of the Committee of Eighteen on the 11th October, that the Assembly Resolutions of the 4th October, 1921, were not binding, and that the committee was not committing

on the assumption that no single state member was required - or even entitled—to take, on its own initiative, any sanctions that had not been recommended by the Co-ordination Committee. This principle had been proclaimed, as one of the bases of British policy, by Sir Samuel Hoare in his speech in the Assembly on the 11th September, 1935,<sup>1</sup> and it was frequently reaffirmed by the British Government thereafter.

No doubt this principle could be defended with some plausibility on grounds of common sense. How, it might be asked, could one nation be expected to make sacrifices in a common cause unless it knew that the same sacrifices were going to be made by its associates? And what would be the use of taking an economic sanction singly, considering that the efficacy of economic sanctions was dependent, in the nature of the case, upon their being applied by all, or at any rate by most, of the states that happened to possess or control, between them, the world supply of each commodity that was to be denied to the state against whom the sanctions were being directed? It could also be pointed out that the Covenant did, after all, provide for co-ordination in the sharing of the losses and in the meeting of the risks which the application of economic sanctions might entail, for in Article 16, paragraph 3, the members of the League had agreed that they would 'mutually support one another in the financial and economic measures which' were 'taken under this article, in order to minimize the loss and inconvenience resulting from the above measures', and also that they would 'mutually support one another in resisting any special measures aimed at one of their number by the 'Covenant-breaking state'. Such a mutual acceptance of common liabilities presupposed, it might perhaps be argued, a previous common consent in taking the action out of which such liabilities might arise. Common sense and equity might possibly speak with one voice in order to suggest, on such lines as these, that no state member could be expected—or indeed, permitted—to exceed, for its own part, the greatest common measure of the action to which the whole array of sanction-taking states was prepared to commit itself. It would perhaps have been difficult, however, to argue that this view—which looked for its justification to an appeal to common sense—was juridically correct. For juridically each state member was bound individually by the terms of the Covenant, as set out in Article 16, paragraph 1:

Should any member of the League resort to war in disregard of its itself to abstain from any action that went beyond the limits of these resolutions (see p. 223, below).

<sup>1</sup> The passage is quoted on p. 188, above.



covenants under Articles 12, 13 or 15, it shall *ipso facto* be deemed to have committed an act of war against all other members of the League, which hereby undertake immediately to subject it to the severance of all trade or financial relations, the prohibition of all intercourse between their nationals and the nationals of the covenant-breaking state, and the prevention of all financial, commercial, or personal intercourse between the nationals of the covenant-breaking state and the nationals of any other state, whether a member of the League or not.

A complete implementation of this undertaking was manifestly incumbent upon each of the thirteen members of the Council<sup>1</sup> which had concurred in the conclusion of the Committee of Six that Italy had resorted to war in disregard of her covenants under Article 12 of the Covenant; and it was equally incumbent upon each of the other thirty-six states members which had signified, in the Assembly, their agreement with the judgment of the Thirteen.<sup>2</sup> It must be stated that not one of the forty-nine states members concerned ever carried out its undertakings under Article 16, paragraph 1, in full<sup>3</sup> at any

<sup>1</sup> The report of the Committee of Six had been endorsed by fourteen states members represented on the Council, but the fourteenth was, of course, the actual victim of the aggression, namely Abyssinia.

<sup>2</sup> According to Sir John Fischer Williams, in *op. cit.*, the obligation to implement Article 16 to the full was incumbent upon these forty-nine states members of the League in this particular case in virtue of the fulfilment of *two* conditions, *both* of which had to be fulfilled in order to make Article 16 executory for any state member:

'The starting-point of League action is the individual and separate expression of opinion by each member of the League. If there is sufficient agreement in these opinions to indicate that the 'general sentiment' of the League is in favour of action, the states that have expressed these individual opinions are entitled and bound to take action. But this must be common action on behalf of the League. And it must be co-ordinated by action of the League. . . .'

'It would be an outrage on common sense in dealing with an international document of this character to insist that each individual member of the League was bound to take action by itself, no matter what other members might do, once it reached the conclusion that there had been a resort to war in violation of Article 12, 13 or 15 of the Covenant. It may even be argued that a member of the League is not merely not bound to take separate action but is even, in spite of the language of Article 16, not entitled to do so if it is practically alone in its opinion. Thus the Secretary-General of the League reported to the Council in May 1927 that "it would be a misapplication of the Article, which would not be tolerated, if a member or group of members should claim to act under it on this account in defiance of the general sentiment of the League".'

<sup>3</sup> By the 12th December, 1935, only one of the states members not represented at the Sixteenth Assembly (not counting Germany, whose membership had expired on the 19th October) was abstaining altogether—like Austria, Hungary and Albania—from taking action against Italy under Article 16. This one additional complete defaulter was Paraguay. On the other hand, Dominica was taking action in regard to all the proposals which had been made up to date by the Co-ordination Committee; Guatemala had accepted these proposals in

time between the setting up of the Co-ordination Committee on the 10th October, 1935, and the taking of the committee's decision of the 6th July, 1936,<sup>1</sup> to recommend the abandonment of the application of the sanctions against Italy as from the 15th of that month.<sup>2</sup>

Thus even those states members of the League which were taking certain economic sanctions against Italy on account of her breach of the Covenant were themselves breaking the Covenant in fulfilling less than the whole of their covenanted obligation to break off economic intercourse, completely and immediately, with a Covenant-breaking state; and this breach of contract and contravention of international law on the part of Italy's fellow states members of the League was by no means merely theoretical or academic; for, in this crucial economic field, neutrality was inherently impossible. In so far as a state abstained from duly contributing to the frustration of Italy's act of aggression by cutting off its trade with Italy, it was positively contributing to the successful accomplishment of the aggressor's nefarious design by supplying him with the means of putting that design into execution.

principle, and Salvador was taking action on one of them (the prohibition of the importation of Italian goods).

<sup>1</sup> For this decision, see p. 512, below.

<sup>2</sup> For the actual performance of states members in the application of sanctions see pp. 233-5, below; and Monsieur Litvinov's statement in the Assembly on the 1st July, 1936, cited on pp. 501-2, below.

'The members of the League have in fact not followed or attempted to follow all the proposals made in the resolutions of 1921—thus, for example, at the time when these words are written there has been no severance of diplomatic relations—but they have conformed to the general scheme and spirit of the resolutions by applying economic sanctions gradually and in accordance with a common plan. They have not interpreted the Article as imposing upon each member the difficult obligation of severing at once "immediately" its own trade and financial relations with Italy and preventing all intercourse with Italy by its own nationals and "the nationals of any other state whether a member of the League or not", without first previously ascertaining the probable action of other members. . . . And perhaps the main example which the members have given of their acceptance of the inevitable "gradualness" of the practical administration of the Article is that they have not, at the time when these words are written, passed on from action taken in their own territories to the interruption of all or any Italian communications with the whole outer world by the imposition of a blockade at sea or by the declaration—by a sort of analogy—of certain articles as contraband of war. On this point the language of Article 16 is categorical. If it is not obeyed, the plea must be a plea of confession and avoidance on the ground that the action prescribed is either impossible or would certainly not achieve the end desired. Such a plea depends for its plausibility on the fact that all the Great Powers of the world are not members of the League. We are here in the domain of fact, not of pure law. The necessity for gradualness or even abstention results not from the resolutions of 1921 nor from administrative necessities internal to the League.'—Sir John Fischer Williams in *op. cit.*

For example, the spraying of poison gas over Abyssinian territory by Italian aeroplanes, from December 1935 onwards, and the consequent mutilation, and even killing, of non-combatant men, women and children, as well as members of the Abyssinian fighting forces, was a breach of the international convention of the 17th June, 1925, and a sin in the sight of God, in which other states besides Italy were implicated. For that poison could not have been sprayed from those aeroplanes if the oil fuel for driving the aeroplane engines had not been supplied to Italy—and this by sale at a commercial profit—by the nationals of the states which possessed and controlled the world's oil supplies. This example was particularly clear, because Italy happened to be without oil resources of her own; and the largest oil reserves that she had the physical means of accumulating would have been exhausted long before the use of poison gas reached its height in March and April 1936, if oil had been one of the exports to Italy which the sanction-taking states cut off as from the 18th November, 1935. The example was also particularly flagrant, because the resort to the use of poison gas on Italy's part was a sensationally shocking piece of wickedness, as well as a gross violation of a treaty which Italy, as well as Abyssinia, had signed and ratified. At the same time, this example merely throws into relief a complicity with Italy, on the part of the other states members of the League, which extended over a much wider range. These other states were constituting themselves Italy's accomplices in the measure in which their performance fell short of their pledge under Article 16 of the Covenant.

Apologists for this short measure of fulfilment sometimes pleaded *ad misericordiam*. It was true, they would admit, that the obligations of the Covenant were not being discharged in full; but Signor Mussolini had threatened that a complete application of the obligatory economic sanctions would be answered, on his part, by war; and to be involved in war was not, according to the apologists, in the bargain which was implied in adherence to the Covenant, since Article 16 made the application of military sanctions obligatory only contingently. This is not the place for discussing whether this plea—which virtually invited the Covenant-breaker to dictate to the sanction-taking states what the limit of their fulfilment of their own obligations was to be—was either valid in law or sound in policy. It must, however, be pointed out that, even if the states which were fulfilling less than their obligations could prove that they were influenced wholly by cowardice and not at all by covetousness, the actual effect of their default was not merely to assist the aggressor and to injure his victim.

The effect was not only military but commercial; and its commercial aspect was the flow of war profits into the pockets of the nationals of the states which were imperfectly performing their covenanted duty to subject the aggressor to a complete and immediate economic boycott.

In this light, the criminal act of military aggression against a primitive African community, which was being executed by Italian hands, presents itself, on a larger view, as the common crime of Western Christendom—and this not merely in the indirect sense that the Italians were taking advantage of the common stock of modern Western scientific technique by the unrestricted prostitution, to military purposes, of the equivocal power over Physical Nature which modern Western Man had derived from his recent scientific discoveries. The complicity of the non-Italian majority of Western Christians in the crime of their Italian fellow citizens of the *Repubblica Cristiana* was more direct than this, and more sordid. Europeans and Americans beyond the borders of Italy were deliberately and eagerly making commercial profits out of the will and the power of an Italian dictator to wring from an already ruined Italian people the purchasing-power that he required for buying abroad the material means for waging war on the almost defenceless people of Abyssinia. This world-wide purveyance of supplies to Italy and to the Italian colonies in East Africa was carried on *crescendo* during the months immediately preceding the outbreak of war in East Africa on the 3rd October, 1935, though it was manifest all the time that these supplies were going to be used by Italy for the purpose of committing an act of military aggression against a neighbour who was her fellow member of the League of Nations.<sup>1</sup> And after the outbreak of the war

<sup>1</sup> The nature, range and scale of this world-wide evo-of-the-war traffic in the means of war, for the account of Italy, may be surmised from the following glimpses of it. On the 25th August, for example, it was announced that a 'Glasgow firm of engineers' had 'secured a contract from the Italian Government for the supply of a large and elaborate distillation plant. This plant, it' was 'understood', was 'for the use of the Italian army in East Africa and' was 'intended to ensure an adequate supply of pure water for troops operating in an awkward and difficult country. Such plant, it' was 'stated', was 'not regarded as munitions of war, and' was 'not affected by the ban on the export of armaments'. (*The Times*, 26th August, 1935.) On the 26th August, the press published a Reuter message stating that, in July 1935 alone, 45,000 hectolitres of drinking water, distilled at Aden, had been sold by the British to the Italian authorities for export to Somalia (*Le Temps*, 26th August, 1935). In July 1935, according to the official statistics of the United States Government, 62,169 tons of scrap-iron were shipped to Italy from New York, as against 21,803 tons in July 1934; and the value of the shipments rose to \$610,161 in July 1935 from \$240,367 in June 1934 (*The New York Times*, 29th August, 1935). Before the end of August it was reported that orders for 100,000 pairs of boots for the Italian army were being placed in Northampton-

this ghoulish traffic did not cease. Even in the commodities that were included in the scope of the sanctions recommended by the Co-ordination Committee the traffic continued until the traffickers received their warning that, in these particular lines, their business—including existing contracts which had not been paid for in full by the 19th October, 1935—was to be prohibited by Governmental action as from the 18th November<sup>1</sup> In all other commodities the traffic continued until the war-market was closed through the termination of the war itself as a result of the complete military triumph of Italy and complete collapse of her Abyssinian victim. Until that day arrived, at the beginning of May 1936, there was never any prospect that the

share, and that more were expected to follow (*The Times*, 29th August, 1935). On the 5th September Italian agents were reported to be arranging, in the Polish textile manufacturing cities of Lodz and Bialystok, for a supply of woollen blankets for the Italian army; and at the same time a clearing agreement for increased deliveries of Polish coal to Italy was reported to be under negotiation between the Polish and Italian Governments (*The Times*, 6th September, 1935). On the same date reports came in of shipments to Italy of cereals, coal, oil and timber from Russia and of cereals, dried vegetables and fruits and olive oil from Turkey (*The New York Times*, 6th September, 1935, *The Times*, 7th September, 1935). Coal and cattle were afterwards added to the Turkish contribution (*The Daily Telegraph*, 5th October, 1935; *The Manchester Guardian*, 10th October, 1935). By the middle of September, Czechoslovakia was reaping her share of the war-harvest by sending Italy coal, and Austria by sending her iron and machinery (*The Financial News*, 14th September, 1935). And then the British territories adjoining the war-zone joined in the scramble—Kenya sending bullocks and donkeys and foodstuffs and fodder (*The New York Times*, 23rd September, 1935), and the Sudan sheep, cattle and cotton (*The Manchester Guardian*, 23rd September, 1935). In Kenya, in particular, the business community seems to have scraped together and despatched to Mogadiscio every kind of portable goods on which it was possible to lay hands: gasoline, kerosene, motor trucks, beer, condensed milk, soap, lamps, railway material, tires, tubes, galvanized iron (*The New York Times*, 22nd September, 1935; *The Times*, 23rd September, 1935; *The Daily Telegraph*, 1st October, 1935). On the 25th September it was reported from distant Scandinavia that Swedish factories were working day and night to execute Italian orders (*The New York Times*, 26th September, 1935). And at the end of September Italy's war preparations were declared to be the dominant factor in the world wheat market (*The Financial News*, 28th September, 1935). The last picture on this news-reel is that of an Italian ship at Mombasa loading supplies for the Italian army at record speed during the time of grace which she was allowed to spend in harbour under the Hague neutrality rules (*The Daily Telegraph*, 12th November, 1935). This aggressor merchant ship was aptly named the *Sursum Corda*, for, at the scent of war-profits, men of business had lifted up their hearts not only in Kenya but all over the World. The random illustrations of this war-profit-making that have been given above are sufficient to show how widely 'the civilized world' of the day had implicated itself in advance in the blood-guiltiness for the innocent blood that Italian hands were to shed. The Italian military campaign in East Africa could be described in economic terms as a world-wide business transaction.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 232, below.

traffic in juridically permissible war-supplies for Italy would cease until Italy's means of paying cash, in gold,<sup>1</sup> had been exhausted. At that point, presumably, the traffic would have ceased even if the Italian gold reserve had been exhausted before the Abyssinian capacity for resistance; for, even in the countries where the traffic was being defended on the ground that it was the only alternative to war, it was not being suggested that Governments should carry their surrender to Signor Mussolini's threat of war to the length of compelling their own nationals to supply Italy gratis with oil and other key commodities that were not on the sanctions list! The demand which they were unwilling to resist under threat of war was only the demand that they should furnish these commodities in return for payment at war prices.

With this preface, some account may now be given of the Co-ordination Committee's work. The economic significance and effects of the sanctions which were actually put into force on the recommendation of the Co-ordination Committee are examined in another chapter of this volume.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, in this place the record may be confined to an account of the procedure itself and of its political bearings.

At its first meeting on the morning of the 11th October, 1935, the Co-ordination Committee elected as its chairman<sup>3</sup> Senhor de Vasconcellos (Portugal), and then appointed a 'Little Co-ordination Committee' consisting of the chairman *ex officio*, together with the delegates of the Union of South Africa, Argentina, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Greece, the Netherlands, Poland, Rumania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the U.S.S.R. and Yugoslavia. This inner committee was expressly empowered to co-opt new members; and on the 12th October it co-opted Mexico. Thereafter, it was known as the Committee of Eighteen. This Committee of Eighteen became in practice the body which made the recommendations for the application of sanctions against Italy; and the possibility of effective action was assured to it by the terms of the following resolution<sup>4</sup> which was adopted by the full Co-ordination Committee on the 19th October, at the last meeting of its first session:

The Co-ordination Committee requests the Committee of Eighteen to continue in session in order to follow the execution of the proposals

<sup>1</sup> In A.D. 1935, Judas—enlightened by his last nineteen centuries of commercial practice—was unwilling to take payment in silver.

<sup>2</sup> See section (xii) below.

<sup>3</sup> The Secretary of the Co-ordination Committee was Mr. Loveday, the Director of the Financial Section and Economic Intelligence Service of the League of Nations Secretariat.

<sup>4</sup> Text in the British White Paper *Ethiopia No. 1* of 1936 [Cmd. 5071], p. 50.

already submitted to Governments, and to put such new proposals as it may think advisable to make before the Co-ordination Committee or the Governments represented thereon. To this end, the Committee of Eighteen shall appoint such sub-committees, technical or other, as it may deem fit among its own members or from those of the Co-ordination Committee.

All the meetings of the Committee of Eighteen and of its technical sub-committees were held in private.

At its first meeting, at 3 p m on the afternoon of the 11th October, 1935, the Committee of Eighteen<sup>1</sup> first elected the chairman of the Co-ordination Committee to be its own chairman, and then rejected a suggestion, which was favoured by the representatives of Argentina, Poland and Switzerland, that the committee should take the Assembly resolutions of the 4th October, 1921,<sup>2</sup> as the basis for its work. This suggestion, which would have resulted, if adopted, in a considerable limitation of the freedom of action which the committee possessed as an *ad hoc* association of sovereign states, was vigorously and successfully opposed by the representatives of Rumania, Canada and the United Kingdom. Mr. Eden further succeeded in extricating the committee from the rut of a juridical debate, into which it had thus threatened to fall at the outset of its career, and bringing it to the point of taking the urgent practical action which was the committee's sole, and vitally important, *raison d'être*. He proposed that the committee should at once recommend the raising of the arms embargo against Abyssinia and the imposition of an arms embargo against Italy, and that it should also agree upon a list of arms—for which the United States Government's list<sup>3</sup> might serve as a basis. Thereupon the committee drafted a proposal,<sup>4</sup> embodying these suggestions, for recommendation by the Co-ordination Committee to the Governments. The American list of arms was extended to include powder and explosives; the arms embargo against Italy was made to apply to contracts in process of execution;<sup>5</sup> and each Government was

<sup>1</sup> Actually, the committee did not co-opt its eighteenth member until its second meeting, which was held on the 12th October (see above).

<sup>2</sup> See p. 215, above.

<sup>3</sup> See pp. 240-1, 242, below.

<sup>4</sup> Text in the British White Paper *Ethiopia No. 1* of 1936 [*Omd.* 5071], p. 43.

<sup>5</sup> This provision was likewise included in the subsequent proposals for refusing all imports from Italy and withholding some exports (in addition to the arms list) to Italy. The practical importance of this non-exemption of existing contracts may be gauged from the account—given on pp. 220-2, above—of the rush which had been made by the business community all over the World on the eve of the outbreak of war to do a profitable business with Italy in supplying her war needs—which, of course, ranged over a far wider list of commodities than the list of arms and munitions or even the list of the materials required for manufacturing arms and munitions.

'requested to inform the Committee, through the Secretary-General of the League, within the shortest possible time, of the measures which it' had taken to put the proposal into effect. This recommendation from the Committee of Eighteen for an arms embargo ('Proposal No. 1') was adopted by the Co-ordination Committee unanimously—the Hungarian delegate alone abstaining—that same afternoon. Meanwhile, the Committee of Eighteen had appointed a Sub-Committee for Financial Measures and also a Sub-Committee of Military Experts to complete the list of arms

At the second meeting of the Committee of Eighteen, which was held on the 12th October, the chairman broached the question whether the proposals adopted by the committee were to be communicated to non-member states; and, after a preliminary discussion on this point, the committee began its consideration of economic measures. Under this head, Mr. Eden proposed, as likely to prove the most effective form of economic sanction, a refusal to take imports from Italy; and he submitted that 'an embargo by all members of the League on Italian goods would cut off roughly 70 per cent. of Italy's export trade'. At the same sitting, the French representative, Monsieur Coulondre, proposed that a sub-committee should be appointed to report on possibilities of cutting off the importation into Italy of 'the material means for carrying on the war' over and above the list of 'arms, ammunition and implements of war' in the narrower sense; and he suggested that his own proposal should be given priority over Mr. Eden's (though this without suggesting that Mr. Eden's should be ruled out of consideration). Monsieur Titulescu then pointed out that the British and the French proposals were not mutually incompatible; and he gave his blessing to both—with the stipulation that a committee should be set up to study the execution of the provision in Article 16 of the Covenant, paragraph 3, for mutual support in the financial and economic measures taken under this article, in order to minimize the resulting loss and inconvenience. Monsieur Motta dwelt on the difficulty that Switzerland would find in breaking off economic relations with Italy, and he suggested that Mr. Eden's proposal, as well as Monsieur Coulondre's, should be referred to a technical sub-committee. Thereupon Mr. Eden declared that he welcomed Monsieur Coulondre's proposal in itself, but deprecated the order of priority which the French delegate had suggested.

He would not wish to see his own proposals sent to a technical sub-committee to be examined after the French proposals, for he feared that in that event a very long time might elapse before they came back to the Committee of Eighteen. . . . To be quite frank, he did not believe



that it was in the least necessary to send his proposals to a technical sub-committee at all; they did not require any technical elaboration whatsoever. What they required was an admittedly very difficult political decision.

When, however, the question of economic measures came up again for consideration by the Committee of Eighteen at its fourth meeting, on the afternoon of the 14th October, Monsieur Coulondre proposed that one sub-committee should be appointed to examine both Mr. Eden's proposal and his own, and another to study the question of mutual support—with a request that the two sub-committees should 'pursue their work with the utmost diligence'—and this time Mr. Eden agreed to the suggested procedure, with a stipulation that his own proposal 'should be approved at latest on or about the 18th October'.

Meanwhile, at the third meeting of the Committee of Eighteen on the morning of the 14th October, a draft submitted by the Sub-Committee for Financial Measures ('Proposal No. 2')<sup>1</sup> had been adopted with certain amendments; and at the end of this meeting and the beginning of the fourth meeting on the afternoon of the same day the committee had gone into the question of steps to be taken by members of the League in respect of their public law, in the event of Governments finding that the laws already on the statute-book did not provide them with the powers necessary for putting the Co-ordination Committee's recommendations into effect. In order to guard against delays from this cause, the following resolution was proposed by Mr. Eden and adopted by the Committee of Eighteen at its fourth meeting:

The Governments are invited to put in operation at once such of the measures recommended as can be enforced without fresh legislation, and to take all practicable steps to secure that the measures recommended are completely put into operation by the 31st October, 1935. Any Governments which find it impossible to secure the requisite legislation by that date are requested to inform the committee, through the Secretary-General, of the date by which they expect to be able to do so.

At the same meeting the Committee of Eighteen reaffirmed the stipulations for mutual support in Article 16 of the Covenant, paragraph 3, and appointed a Legal Sub-Committee.

The draft declaration, reaffirming these stipulations of the Covenant, and 'Proposal No. 2' (Financial Measures), as amended by the Committee of Eighteen, were both adopted by the Co-ordination Committee at its third meeting, which was held after the fourth meeting of the Committee of Eighteen on the afternoon of the 14th October.

On the afternoon of the 16th October, the Committee of Eighteen

<sup>1</sup> Text in *Cmd.* 5071, pp. 44-5.

at its fifth meeting, and the Co-ordination Committee at its fourth meeting, successively adopted a resolution which had been drafted by the Legal Sub-Committee of the Committee of Eighteen on steps to be taken by members of the League in respect of their public law, and also a revised list of arms, which had been drawn up by the Sub-Committee of Military Experts and which was now embodied in a 'Proposal No. 1 A'.<sup>1</sup> The legal resolution ran as follows:

The Committee of Co-ordination,

Considering that it is important to ensure rapid and effective application of the measures which have been and may subsequently be proposed by the Committee;

Considering that it rests with each country to apply these measures in accordance with its public law and, in particular, the powers of its Government in regard to execution of treaties:

Calls attention to the fact that the members of the League, being bound by the obligations which flow from Article 16 of the Covenant, are under a duty to take the necessary steps to enable them to carry out these obligations with all requisite rapidity.

The Sub-Committee on Economic Measures completed its work only one day later than Mr. Eden had demanded, for the results of the sub-committee's labours were ready for consideration by the Committee of Eighteen when the latter began its sixth meeting, on the morning of the 19th October. Senhor de Vasconcellos was now able to announce that the sub-committee had found Mr. Eden's and Monsieur Coulondre's proposals to be 'in no sense incompatible' but, 'on the contrary, mutually complementary'; and they had also found, as Mr. Eden had predicted, that, 'by its very nature, the text relating to the prohibition of the importation of Italian goods had not needed detailed technical study'. A draft resolution prohibiting the importation of Italian goods ('Proposal No. 3')<sup>2</sup> was discussed by the committee at this meeting; a draft resolution for an embargo on certain exports to Italy ('Proposal No. 4'),<sup>3</sup> as well as a draft on the organization of mutual support ('Proposal No. 5'),<sup>4</sup> was considered at the seventh meeting, on the afternoon of the same day. In the discussion of 'Proposal No. 3' the debate turned on the question of the date on which the Co-ordination Committee was to reassemble 'for the purpose of fixing, in the light of the replies received [from Governments], the date on which the . . . measures should be put into operation'—and this question equally affected 'Proposal No. 4'. The date inserted (at Mr. Eden's instance) in the sub-committee's original draft had been the 29th October; the Turkish delegate proposed the 4th

<sup>1</sup> Text in *op. cit.*, pp. 43-4.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 46-7.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 45-6.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 47-50.

November; and the committee compromised by deciding, by a majority, in favour of the 31st October. The debate on 'Proposal No. 5' turned on the delicate question of whether, and to what extent, the non-sanction-taking states (of whom some were members of the League, and other non-members) should be penalized, or, short of that, should be prevented from deriving special advantages for themselves from the imposition of sanctions against Italy on the part of the sanction-taking states members. Proposals Nos. 3, 4 and 5 were adopted by the Co-ordination Committee at its fifth meeting on the evening of the 19th October.

At the same meeting, the Co-ordination Committee adopted a resolution (quoted above)<sup>1</sup> for keeping the Committee of Eighteen in being, and they also adopted the text of a communication, to the following effect, which was to be sent by the chairman to the Governments of non-member states:

The Chairman of the Committee of Co-ordination of Measures to be taken under Article 16 of the Covenant has the honour to transmit herewith to states non-members of the League, in accordance with the decision of the Co-ordination Committee, formed as the result of the recommendation adopted by the Assembly on the 10th October, the principal recent documents in the Italo-Ethiopian dispute, including the minutes of the Council of the 7th October, the minutes of the Assembly of the 9th to 11th October, and the recommendations of the Co-ordination Committee. He is instructed to add that the Governments represented on the Co-ordination Committee would welcome any communication which any non-member state may deem it proper to make or notification of any action which it may be taking in the circumstances.

Thus, within ten days of the Assembly's concurrence with the findings of the Council, a committee representing fifty-two states members of the League had adopted—for recommendation to the Governments of all states members except the three dissentients and the two belligerents—five proposals which, if put into effect, would fulfil a substantial part, though by no means the whole,<sup>2</sup> of the

<sup>1</sup> On pp. 222-3.

<sup>2</sup> This point was underlined by Monsieur Litvinov in a statement which he made at a meeting of the Co-ordination Committee on the 19th October, 1935:

'Those measures constituted a system of economic sanctions, but the system was not exhaustive. The Co-ordination Committee had not gone the whole possible length of economic sanctions, because it had taken into consideration a number of circumstances peculiar to the case with which it was dealing. It did not follow, therefore, that the present limitation of the sanctions adopted could be taken in the future as a precedent in other cases of aggression, where it might well be decided to enlarge upon the present system.'

Compare the passages, quoted on pp. 501-2, below, from Monsieur Litvinov's speech in the Assembly of the League on the 1st July, 1936.

obligations to which each state member was committed under Article 16 of the Covenant. Notwithstanding its incompleteness, this was a remarkable international achievement—and that on several different accounts.

In the first place, the League was here doing pioneer work in a wholly unexplored piece of country. The whole organization for studying and proposing the sanctions had to be improvised at a few hours' notice; and even when the Co-ordination Committee and the Committee of Eighteen and the several technical sub-committees had been successively set up, they had to set to work without any precedents to guide them, and at the same time to accomplish their task, as a matter of extreme urgency, under high pressure. Moreover, the architects of these sanctions had to overcome first a general disinclination to impose any fresh economic strain upon a social fabric which had barely begun to recover from a devastating economic depression, and then the particular disinclination of each sanction-taking state to make national sacrifices—a disinclination which was a formidable force in an age when national selfishness was being cultivated as the quintessence of public virtue under the name of *sacro egoismo*.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the difficulty of demanding such sacrifices was accentuated by the inevitable inequality of the incidence of the sacrifice as between this country and that. Some countries—for example, Yugoslavia and Rumania—stood to lose, through the operation of Proposals Nos. 3 and 4, a notably larger proportion of their foreign trade than the majority of their associates; others—for example, France, Switzerland and Spain—were specially sensitive to the prospect of the deterioration in their political relations with Italy which their participation in the common sanctions might entail; and these unavoidable and considerable inequalities of sacrifice and of risk could only be redressed in a rough and ready way, and to an uncertain degree, by the implementation of the provisions in the Covenant for mutual support (economic and political)—however loyally these obligations might be fulfilled by states members which might find themselves less hard hit or less dangerously exposed. In these far from propitious circumstances, the solidarity of the Co-ordination Committee and the energy of the Committee of Eighteen and the rapid working of the several technical sub-committees took the world by surprise.

What was it that accounted for this unexpected and noteworthy

<sup>1</sup> The phrase *sacro egoismo per l'Italia* seems first to have been used by Signor Salandra, at that time Prime Minister of Italy, in a speech which he made on taking charge of the Italian Foreign Office on the 16th October, 1914.

success—at any rate, in the first stage—of a new essay in international co-operation in an epoch in which, in general, the conduct of international affairs had been attended with more numerous failures and more disheartening frustrations than that of any other department of the social life of the Oecumenical Society of the age? The remarkable activity of the Governments represented on the Co-ordination Committee was generated by the combined operation of at least four distinct factors.

One factor was a lively realization—in the mind of the peoples,<sup>1</sup> as well as in the mind of the Governments—of what the penalties for hesitation and failure in this case would be. The League of Nations had barely survived the Japanese breach of the Covenant;<sup>2</sup> the Italian breach, which had now followed at an interval of only four years, was still more flagrant; and it was impossible to be blind to the truth that the League was bound to collapse under this second blow if the Italian aggressor were permitted to strike it with impunity. Peoples and Governments which were unwilling to make any serious sacrifices for the sake of the League were at the same time appalled by the prospect of an Ishmaelitic struggle of all against all which would be the inevitable sequel to an annihilation of the collective security which the League represented. This sense of the gravity of the hour prevailed to some extent over the inertia and timidity that reigned at this time in public affairs in all countries other than the desperate-minded, dictatorially governed, totalitarian states. The effect of this stimulus was apparent in the action of France, Switzerland and Spain; for all these three states participated (however reluctantly and half-heartedly) in the application of sanctions, in spite of the fact that their national outlooks and policies tempted all three of them to turn a blind eye to Italy's misconduct.

There was a second stimulus which was personal, and this was the personality of Mr. Anthony Eden—for the Italians were as right in believing that Mr. Eden's rôle was important as they were wrong in denouncing it as illegitimate. The success of the dictators (who had been the only successful politicians in the world so far in the post-war period) had demonstrated—if a truism needed demonstrating—that, in the Great Society of the twentieth century of the Christian Era, personal leadership was still as important a factor in public affairs as it had ever been (notwithstanding the attempts of nineteenth-century Western philosophers to present human history in impersonal

<sup>1</sup> See section (ii) above.

<sup>2</sup> See the *Survey for 1931*, Part IV, section (iii) (4); the *Survey for 1932*, Part V, section (iv); and the *Survey for 1933*, Part IV, section (iv).

terms, as a process of the same kind as the growth of a coral-reef or the depositing of a mud-bank). Opportunities for leadership were, of course, not confined to dictatorially governed communities; they also existed in democratic states and international associations; and at Geneva in the autumn of 1935 Mr. Eden found, and seized, an opportunity for exercising a democratic leadership. His age told in his favour; for, as a representative of a doubly and trebly decimated generation, he had a rarity value in a world that was still being governed (apart from the dictatorships) by men who had already reached middle age before 1914. And, in Mr. Eden's case, this fortuitous advantage of belonging to the generation which had borne the brunt of the War of 1914-18 was reinforced by his personal energy, his resourcefulness and his belief in the policy which he was endeavouring to put into effect.<sup>1</sup> Assuredly the Committee of Eighteen would have accomplished much less than it did accomplish if Mr. Eden had not been serving on it.

There were also two negative and impersonal factors which played their part. One of these was the precocious gift for technique which had been bestowed, by an ironical Destiny, upon a society which would have seemed morally infantile to an Indian observer of the fifth century B.C. or to a West-European observer of the twelfth century of the Christian Era, if either had risen up in judgment with this generation. This prodigious technological virtuosity of the Oecumenical Society of the twentieth century was almost as apt at the mechanization of human relations as it was at the mechanization of brute matter; and in so far as the imposition of sanctions was a matter of complex organization, and not of 'very difficult political decisions', the people who were now called upon to take action were in their element.

Finally, there was the fact that the particular operations which the experts were instructed to carry out were as familiar to them as they were congenial to the spirit of the times; for the weapons which were now being turned to international account for the social purpose of frustrating an act of international aggression, and thereby vindicating the principle of collective security, had been recently forged in national armouries for the anti-social purposes of economic nationalism. As Mr. Eden confessed in advocating the embargo on the acceptance of Italian exports,

It is a measure which can be brought into operation immediately in any country where the necessary legislative authority exists. Limitation

<sup>1</sup> For this belief, see, for example, Mr. Eden's speech at Leamington on the 28th October, 1935.

of imports by quota has unfortunately been only too common for some time past in many countries, and the administrative authorities, therefore, would not be undertaking a task to which they were not accustomed.

Taken together, these considerations explain the achievement of the Committee of Eighteen in framing, and of the Co-ordination Committee in adopting for recommendation, in the nine days between the 11th and the 19th October, 1935, the five proposals recounted above. It remains to record the response of the Governments.

When the Co-ordination Committee duly reassembled at Geneva at 6 p.m. on the 31st October, 1935, the chairman was able at once to report to his colleagues 'that fifty Governments had prohibited, or were about to prohibit, the export to Italy of arms, munitions and war material, in conformity with Proposal No. 1 adopted on the 11th October. The Government of the United States of America had prohibited, even before the committee's deliberations, the export of arms, munitions and war material to either of the parties to the dispute. In the next place, forty-nine Governments had already taken action on Proposal No. 2, or had declared their readiness to take such action. With regard to Proposals Nos. 3 and 4 for the prohibition of imports from Italy and the embargo on certain exports to Italy, the replies received from forty-eight Governments already warranted the conclusion that those proposals had met with very extensive agreement on the part of Governments. Lastly, thirty-nine replies had been received to Proposal No. 5.'

The Committee of Eighteen, at two meetings held earlier on the same day, had already been considering special cases raised in replies from Governments, and especially the date of the coming into force of the proposed measures; the question of contracts in course of execution and the general question of clearing agreements; and the problems of outstanding claims and of the execution of fully-paid contracts. These discussions of special cases were continued on the 1st and 2nd November at three more meetings of the Committee of Eighteen; and at the meeting on the morning of the 2nd it was also decided to propose to the Co-ordination Committee that the 18th November should be chosen as the date for the entry into force of the measures indicated in Proposals Nos. 3 and 4.

Among the intentions, notified by particular Governments, of departing from the Co-ordination Committee's five proposals, the notifications which excited the greatest interest and concern were those from Luxembourg and Switzerland in regard to Proposal No. 1 (the arms embargo). While consenting to put this proposal into operation against Italy, these two states both insisted upon putting

it into operation at the same time against Abyssinia, on the ground that it was both improper and impolitic for them, as states vowed to perpetual neutrality, to discriminate in this matter between the aggressor and his victim. This Swiss and Luxembourgish deviation from the line that was being followed, in the arms embargo, by other sanction-taking countries was no doubt of slight practical importance in the Italo-Ethiopian conflict, since Abyssinia could obtain her foreign supplies of arms from other sources; but at the same time it constituted a precedent which might prove to be of crucial practical importance in future conflicts—particularly if the scene of action were not Africa but Europe. For example, if Switzerland—with the same deliberate indiscriminateness—were to prohibit the re-export and transit, besides the export, of arms to the legally certified victims as well as to the legally certified perpetrators of aggression in some future European war in which the certified victims of aggression were France and her East-European allies, this Swiss policy might seriously hamper the victims' endeavours to co-operate with one another for their joint self-defence against the aggressor. On this account, the policy of Switzerland and Luxembourg was not allowed, on the Committee of Eighteen, to pass without energetic protests from the representatives of France, the Little Entente, the Balkan Entente and the Soviet Union; and it was significant that the representative of Poland joined the chorus.

These meetings of the Committee of Eighteen were followed, on the afternoon of the 2nd November, by another meeting of the Co-ordination Committee at which the French and British Governments were represented respectively by Monsieur Laval and Sir Samuel Hoare. At this meeting the Co-ordination Committee adopted resolutions submitted by the Committee of Eighteen, in which the Governments were asked to bring Proposals Nos. 2, 3 and 4 into force by the 18th November. They also adopted a resolution,<sup>1</sup> likewise submitted by the Committee of Eighteen, on outstanding claims; and they agreed to a proposal, made by the Committee of Eighteen, that, as an exception to Proposal No. 3, contracts for which payment had been made in full by the 19th October, 1935, might be executed. These ratificatory formalities were not, however, the only business that was transacted by the Co-ordination Committee on this occasion. It was not for that purpose that Monsieur Laval and Sir Samuel Hoare had taken the trouble to attend. The political pronouncements made by these two statesmen on the 2nd November, 1935, from the platform provided by the Co-ordination Committee, and the suggestion thrown

<sup>1</sup> Text in *Omd.* 5071, p. 52.



out by the Belgian representative, Monsieur van Zeeland, on the strength of what his French and English colleagues had just said, are dealt with below<sup>1</sup> in connexion with the history of the abortive 'Laval-Hoare Peace Plan'. A motion, which was made at this second session of the Committee of Eighteen, for extending the range of sanctions beyond the limits of the existing five proposals, is also dealt with in the same context. In the present chapter, we have still to follow out the response of the Governments to the five proposals which had been recommended by the Co-ordination Committee between the 11th and the 19th October.

On the 6th November, at the last meeting of its second session, the Committee of Eighteen 'requested certain Governments<sup>2</sup> to nominate experts to study in Geneva the information furnished by Governments concerning the application of the measures proposed by the Co-ordination Committee and to furnish the chairman with such assistance as he might desire, more particularly with regard to any question which might be submitted to him by Governments with regard to the application of those measures. The experts met from the 27th to the 30th November and from the 10th to the 12th December, 1935, and studied the replies received from Governments with reference to the application of the proposals of the Co-ordination Committee and such texts of laws and decrees as had reached Geneva by the date of the 11th December.' In their report,<sup>3</sup> which was dated the 12th December, 1935, the experts informed the Committee of Eighteen that, on the showing of the replies received at Geneva, Proposal No. 1 had been accepted by fifty-two Governments, and fifty of these Governments had notified the Co-ordination Committee of its entry into force; Proposal No. 2 had been accepted by fifty-two Governments, and forty-seven of these Governments had notified the Co-ordination Committee of its entry into force; Proposal No. 3 had been accepted by fifty Governments, and forty-three of these Governments had notified the Co-ordination Committee of its entry into force; Proposal No. 4 had been accepted by fifty-one Governments, and forty-five of these Governments had notified the Co-ordination Committee of its entry into force; Proposal No. 5 had been accepted by forty-six Governments. In addition, three Governments had sent communications which would appear to indicate their acceptance in principle.

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 285-6, below.

<sup>2</sup> The countries sending experts were: Belgium, United Kingdom, France, Greece, Netherlands, Poland, Rumania, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Jugoslavia.

<sup>3</sup> *Cmd.* 5071, pp. 57-66.

In certain countries in which legislative action had not yet been taken, draft laws incorporating the principles of the Co-ordination Committee's proposals were before Parliament.

Four states—Albania, Austria, Hungary and Paraguay—were taking no action under Article 16 of the Covenant. Guatemala had in principle accepted the proposals of the Co-ordination Committee, but it would not appear to be clear from the documents before that committee that it had taken the necessary measures. The Government of Salvador had remarked that, of the proposals of the Co-ordination Committee, only Proposal No. 3 (on which it had acted) had any practical significance so far as its territory was concerned.

Two of the states that were executing Proposals Nos. 1 and 1 A (export of arms)—namely, Luxembourg and Switzerland—had prohibited the export of arms, ammunition and implements of war both to Ethiopia and to Italy.

In Austria and Hungary, the export of arms was illegal and was prohibited under the Treaties of Peace.

Certain of the countries executing Proposal No. 3 (prohibition of the importation of Italian goods) had considered it desirable, in order to render the system effective, to demand a certificate of origin for goods coming from countries neighbours of Italy which were not applying Proposal No. 3.

The Swiss Government had not prohibited the import of goods from Italy, but had entered into a clearing agreement under which, according to the explanation given to the committee, any transfer from Switzerland of funds derived from Italian exports would be rendered impossible. The committee had been informed that the total value of imports from and exports to Italy would not in any quarter exceed the total value of such imports and exports respectively during the corresponding period of 1934 and that, furthermore, the Federal Government reserved to itself the right to apply this limitation, not only to the total value of imports and exports, but also to classes of goods.

The committee had made a study of the area covered by the measures taken by the Governments of members of the League. It appeared from this study that all colonies, protectorates, dependencies, condominiums, leased territories and mandated territories of countries which had applied measures were covered by those measures, with the exception of the Spanish colonies, of Morocco (with reference to which conversations were about to be initiated) and of Spitzbergen, which was icebound at this time of year.

In territories subject to concessions, the nationals of states which

had applied measures were, or would shortly be, bound by the stipulations of those laws or decrees.

Furthermore, the Dominion of Newfoundland had up to date taken measures to enforce Proposals Nos. 1 and 2 and was taking the necessary action with regard to Proposals Nos. 3 and 4.

The committee did not consider that it fell within its functions to review the situation in non-member states or the action which had been taken in order to draw their attention to the proposals of the Co-ordination Committee.

The report from which the facts above mentioned have been extracted was a monument not only to the technical organizing ability of the society in which these complicated measures were being recommended and executed and surveyed, but also to the high standard of the good faith with which some fifty states members of the League were discharging their obligations under Article 16 of the Covenant within the limits within which the Co-ordination Committee had recommended that these obligations should be fulfilled.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, even in this far from complete application of Article 16, there was probably a greater discrepancy between promise and performance than would be apparent if the official figures and the reassuring formulae of the Experts' Report of the 12th December, 1935, were to be accepted quite simple-mindedly at their face-value. The shortness of the measure in which the undertakings of the sanction-taking states were fulfilled by certain states under certain heads was indicated (in terms that do not appear to have been challenged) by Monsieur Litvinov in a speech delivered in the League Assembly on the 1st July, 1936.<sup>2</sup> And an historian might be in danger of under-rating both the prowess and the achievement of the British representative on the Committee of Eighteen if he were to ignore the possibility that the impressive solidarity of the sanctions front behind the footlights of the public stage at Geneva may have masked a severe and sordid struggle behind the scenes in which certain of the parties (e.g. the United Kingdom) were wrestling with other parties (e.g. the Netherlands or Yugoslavia) in order to induce them to act up to their assumed part in the common undertaking. In the event, even the incomplete performance *de facto* of an undertaking which was itself an incomplete implementation of the states members' obligations *de jure* was perhaps not secured, up to the level actually attained, without recourse, on the part of the leaders of the enter-

<sup>1</sup> For the moral and material aspects of the non-fulfilment of the balance of these obligations, see pp. 215 *seqq.*, above.

<sup>2</sup> See the passage quoted from this speech on pp. 501-2, below.

prise, both to 'brow-beating' (in the shape of political pressure) on the one hand and on the other hand to 'bribery' (in the shape of the provision of alternative markets in compensation for the loss of those Italian markets which it was now the acknowledged duty of states members to sacrifice). This unpleasant and discouraging experience in privacy may have been a consideration which, while unavowed (and unavowable) in public, nevertheless became a factor in the determination of the United Kingdom Government's policy. And if Mr. Baldwin's lips had been unsealed, he might perhaps have been heard to plead this experience in part excuse for the British Government's own subsequent lukewarmness over proposals to impose additional sanctions, as well as for their eventual decision to take the initiative in recommending that the existing sanctions should be abandoned.

In order to complete this chapter, mention must be made of the responses received from certain states non-members of the League to the communication<sup>1</sup> which had been addressed to them by the chairman of the Co-ordination Committee in pursuance of the instructions given him by the committee on the 19th October. It is also necessary to mention the protest addressed by the Italian Government to the sanction-taking Powers, and the resulting diplomatic correspondence.

Senhor de Vasconcellos' note of the 21st October was answered by the Secretary of State at Washington, Mr. Cordell Hull, in a note of the 26th October which was as non-committal in effect as it was friendly in tone.<sup>2</sup> After recapitulating the action with regard to the Italo-Abyssinian conflict which had been taken by the United States Government up to date,<sup>3</sup> Mr. Hull concluded:

The course thus pursued in advance of action by other Governments . . . represents the independent and affirmative policy of the Government of the United States and indicates its purpose not to be drawn into the war and its desire not to contribute to a prolongation of the war.

Realizing that war adversely affects every country, that it may seriously endanger the economic welfare of each, and that it causes untold human misery and even threatens the existence of Civilization, the United States, in keeping with the letter and spirit of the Pact of Paris and other peace obligations, undertakes at all times not only to exercise its moral influence in favour of peace throughout the World, but to contribute in every practicable way, within the limitations of our foreign

<sup>1</sup> See p. 227, above.

<sup>2</sup> For the American attitude towards the Italo-Abyssinian conflict, see pp. 92 *seqq.*, above.

<sup>3</sup> This action is recorded in the present *Survey* on pp. 240 *seqq.*, below.

policy, to that end. It views with sympathetic interest the individual or concerted efforts of other nations to preserve peace or to localize and shorten the duration of war.

In regard to the action of Germany,<sup>1</sup> the Committee of Eighteen was informed by its secretary<sup>2</sup> on the 6th November that 'the German Government' were 'at the present moment troubled by the fact that a number of private persons—German and foreign—' were 'purchasing all sorts of materials in Germany, apparently with a view to exporting them at a profit to the belligerent countries. The Government' did 'not wish this to happen and' would, 'in the very next few days, issue laws with a view to controlling, and, if necessary, stopping, such purchases and export, for the purpose of preventing private profiteering'.

On the whole, the sanction-taking countries perhaps met with less co-operation than they had hoped for from the United States and with less obstruction than they had feared from Germany.

The one non-member state which applied against Italy the sanctions recommended to states members of the League by the Co-ordination Committee was Egypt.<sup>3</sup> The Egyptian Government decided to take this action on the 31st October, and though the Italian Government lodged a protest at Cairo on the 3rd November, a decree on the application of sanctions was published in Egypt on the 28th of that month.

On the 11th November, 1935, the Italian Government delivered a note of protest to the Government of every state member of the League that was participating in the imposition of sanctions against Italy. The note recapitulated on paper the apologia which had already been recited orally, on several occasions, by Baron Aloisi at Geneva. In particular, the note represented the Italian invasion of Abyssinia, now in progress, as an act of liberation (which would incidentally preclude the possibility of any withdrawal from the occupied territories). The note concluded with some perhaps not very convincing

<sup>1</sup> For the German attitude towards the Italo-Abyssinian conflict, see pp. 90-2, above.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Loveday's statement to the committee was made with the following preface:

'I wish to make a statement to the committee with reference to certain information relating to Germany which has been communicated orally to the Secretariat. I want to make it quite clear that this information must not be interpreted in any way as being a reply from the German Government to the communication which you, Mr. Chairman, have made to it. On the other hand, from a practical point of view, the attitude of the German Government is known to the Governments concerned.'

<sup>3</sup> For the Egyptian attitude towards the Italo-Abyssinian conflict, see pp. 96-8, above.

threats of Italian retaliation in kind to the economic pressure which some fifty states were bringing to bear upon Italy.

On the 17th November the Fascist Grand Council adopted a resolution in which the following passages occurred:

The Fascist Grand Council, assembled on the eve of the so-called 'sanctions' against Italy, considers the 18th November, 1935, as a date of ignominy and iniquity in the history of the World; it denounces the sanctions, never before applied, as a plan to suffocate the Italian people economically and as a vain effort to humiliate it, in order to prevent it from realizing its ideals and defending its *raison d'être*. . . . It orders a stone record of the siege to be sculptured upon the buildings of the Italian communes, so that the enormous injustice perpetrated against Italy, to which the civilization of all continents owes so much, may remain on record down the centuries; it sends the expression of its sympathy to those states which, in refusing to adhere to sanctions, have aided the cause of peace and interpreted the spirit of the peoples. The Fascist Grand Council is convinced that the coming test will reveal to the World the Roman virtue of the Italian people in the year 14 of the Fascist era.

The sanction-taking states did not meet in conference for the purpose of drafting a collective reply to the separate notes which they had received from Rome; but they consulted together through diplomatic channels in order to ensure that their several replies should run on parallel lines. The common form of the replies was to ignore the Italian apologia and to bear testimony to the scrupulousness and fair-mindedness which had marked the proceedings at Geneva that had resulted in the condemnation of Italy as an aggressor. The French reply pointed out—in two sentences which French, as well as Italian, readers might take to heart—that

from the situation thus created arose unavoidable consequences. To have repudiated the obligation of the Covenant would have been to compromise seriously for the future the possibilities of applying provisions which constitute an essential element of the collective security assured to the members of the League.

The British reply answered an Italian question—'In what way' did 'His Britannic Majesty's Government propose, in their free and sovereign judgment, to conduct themselves with regard to the restrictive measures proposed against Italy?'—by observing that

His Majesty's Government, in subscribing to the Covenant, did not, indeed, abandon or renounce their own free and sovereign judgment, but undertook to exercise it thenceforth in accordance with the obligations of that instrument. No other attitude is open to them, and they would naturally desire to see the Italian Government place a similar construction on their own adherence to the Covenant.

The Russian reply informed Signor Mussolini that the Soviet Government did not consider themselves entitled

individually to give explanations regarding decisions adopted collectively by an international organization with the participation of over fifty states, more especially as Italy is herself a member of this organization and can put any question to it directly.

It will be seen that, in opening this controversy, the Italian Government had exposed themselves to being buffeted by heavier verbal blows than they were able to inflict upon their adversaries.

### (vii) The Action of the United States

The division of American public opinion between three schools of policy—the champions of neutral rights and the advocates of isolation and the crypto-collectivists—has been touched upon already in another chapter of this volume.<sup>1</sup> It may almost be taken for granted that this unofficial debate would have issued in some kind of official action sooner or later. This action, however, might have been longer in coming if the approach of war in Africa had not forced the hand of the Congress and the Administration at Washington.

At the end of March 1935 it was announced that a report on the problem of American neutrality had been prepared for the President by the State Department, and on the 10th April President Roosevelt held a consultation on the subject with Mr. Secretary Hull, while on the 25th and 26th April the question was debated, in Washington, at the annual meeting of the American Society of International Law. On the 3rd July the question was brought nearer home by the action of the Emperor of Ethiopia, who on that date handed to the American *chargé d'affaires* at Addis Ababa a communication requesting the Government of the United States to examine ways and means for securing the observance of the Briand-Kellogg Pact of Paris. President Roosevelt rejected this request, without loss of time, on the 5th. In the reply which he addressed to Addis Ababa on that day, he expressed his gratification that the League of Nations had given its attention to the Italo-Abyssinian dispute and his hope that the arbitral procedure would result in a decision satisfactory to both of the Governments concerned; and he concluded with a declaration that the American Government 'would be loath to believe that either [Italy or Abyssinia] would resort to other than pacific means as a method of dealing with this controversy or would permit any situation to arise which would be inconsistent with the commitments of

<sup>1</sup> Section (ii) (h) above.

the pact'. On the 7th July it was announced that the American *chargé d'affaires* at Addis Ababa had been instructed to advise all American citizens resident in Abyssinia to assemble in the capital and hold themselves in readiness to leave the country at short notice. At Washington, on the 11th July, the Secretary of State received the Italian, French and British Ambassadors in order to talk to them about the Italo-Abyssinian crisis; and on the 12th he made a public statement on the Briand-Kellogg Pact, in which he said no more than that 'the United States and the other nations' were 'interested in the maintenance of' that instrument. On the 24th July the President asked that some neutrality legislation should be placed on the agenda of Congress for the current session, and on the 26th he declared orally to the press that the Italo-Ethiopian dispute was not a direct concern of the United States. On the 1st August, however, he issued a statement declaring that at this moment, when the League Council was in session to consider ways for composing by pacific means the differences that had arisen between Italy and Ethiopia, he wished to give voice to the hope of the people and Government of the United States that an amicable solution would be found and that peace would be maintained.

Practical action on the Administration's part with a view to preventing the United States from becoming entangled in the approaching war was taken on the 7th and 8th August, when it was announced that credits would not be granted by the governmental Export-Import Bank to American exporters for financing cotton shipments to Italy; and the legislation which this administrative step had anticipated was passed before the end of the calendar month.

Resolutions were introduced in the Senate on the 21st August and in the House of Representatives next day, and these were then amalgamated into a joint resolution of Congress which was passed by the House on the 23rd and by the Senate on the 24th and received the President's signature on the 31st. Some of the provisions of the resolution were permanent—for example, the institution of a National Munitions Control Board to administer a licensing system for the manufacture and export of arms and munitions. But the resolution was only to have force until the 29th February, 1936 (pending the passage of permanent legislation by that date), in respect of the provision which was of outstanding importance for the immediate future; and this was a provision making it 'mandatory' (i.e. obligatory) for the President, 'upon the outbreak, or during the progress, of war' between foreign countries, to impose, against the belligerents on both sides, without discrimination, an embargo upon the exportation



to them, from the United States, of arms and munitions of war which were to be scheduled in a list which the President was to proclaim.<sup>1</sup> In this matter, the only discretion which the new provisional legislation gave to the President was in regard to the determination of the question whether a war was in progress; when once that question of fact had been answered by the President in the affirmative, everything else would follow automatically: a number of scheduled commodities would at once cease to be legally exportable from the United States to any Presidentially certified belligerent, without distinction of aggressors and victims.

This denial by Congress to the President of any voice in deciding what commodities should be withheld, and from whom, was deprecated both by the State Department and by the President himself; and, had time allowed, it seems likely that President Roosevelt would have offered resistance to the Congressional policy of clipping the Presidential wings to this extent. The rapidly growing threat of war, and the consequent increase in the importunity of the public demand for the prompt passage of neutrality legislation of some sort, forced the President into a compromise for which he perhaps found some consolation in the shortness of the term for which the provisional measure was to have effect—for the President appears to have hoped that he might succeed in persuading Congress to shape more to his own liking the subsequent permanent legislation which must soon be drafted in order to supersede the present temporary resolution on the 1st March, 1936.

Thereafter, on the 12th September, Mr. Secretary Hull issued a new statement which began with a review of the United States' action up to date in regard to the Italo-Abyssinian dispute (including the step taken by the State Department on the 3rd September in prevailing upon the Standard-Vacuum Oil Company to renounce the Rickett Concession),<sup>2</sup> and which concluded with an expression, in distinctly stronger terms than those previously employed, of the United States Government's concern for the maintenance of peace and, in particular, for the loyal observance of the Kellogg Pact by all the parties to it. This statement by the Secretary of State was publicly endorsed by the President next day; and on the 2nd October, the eve of the day on which the Italians started fighting in Africa,

<sup>1</sup> This list, which was duly proclaimed on the 25th September, 1935, was compiled on rather old-fashioned lines which took little account of the *de facto* extension in the range of commodities constituting arms and munitions under the technical conditions of contemporary warfare. For the subsequent use, and enlargement of, this list by the Committee of Eighteen at Geneva, see pp. 223-4, above.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 179, above.

a last appeal for peace—this time, in its bearing upon economic recovery—was made by Mr. Hull at Washington.

Thereafter, shortly before midnight on the 5th October, 1935, the President acted on the Congressional joint resolution of the 31st August, and on the Presidential arms schedule proclamation of the 25th September, by issuing a fresh proclamation which brought the joint resolution into force, within the scope of the arms schedule, as against Italy and Abyssinia. The finding, in President Roosevelt's proclamation, 'that a state of war unhappily exists between Ethiopia and the Kingdom of Italy' thus anticipated by nearly two days the League Council's finding, on the 7th October, that Italy was at war in contravention of the Covenant.<sup>1</sup> The proclamation of the 5th October was accompanied by a statement in which the President issued the warning

that any of our people who voluntarily engage in transactions of any character with either of the belligerents do so at their own risk.

In a further proclamation issued at the same time, the President warned American citizens—with an ironically scrupulous care to respect the wishes of Congress by avoiding any unneutral discrimination between the maritime and the landlocked belligerent—that they would also be acting at their own risk if they travelled on either Italian or Ethiopian ships; and thereafter, in a series of statements and acts, the Administration pointedly signified its desire to reduce to a minimum the American trade with the belligerents, even outside the limits of the arms list—but this always with a guardedness that left no loophole for critics to accuse the President or his officers of being influenced by any other motive than that of insulating the United States from the war in Africa.

On the 9th October, for example, an official at Washington let it be known that he was watching for exports in 'excessive quantities beyond the normal demands of Italian industry'. On the same day the governmental Export-Import Bank announced that it would not accede to requests for credit assistance from firms desiring to trade with Italy. And on the 10th Mr. Hull declared that, while 'technically' there was 'no legal prohibition'—apart from the arms embargo—against American citizens 'entering into transactions with the belligerents or either of them', at the same time the President's warnings 'were based upon the policy and purpose of keeping' the United States 'from being drawn into war', and that 'it certainly was not intended to encourage transactions with the belligerents'. On the

<sup>1</sup> See p. 206, above.

11th *The New York Times* published a weighty letter from Mr. Hull's predecessor in office, Mr. Stimson, calling for the grant to the President of wider powers to place an embargo on the export to belligerents of commodities serviceable for the conduct of war, beyond the arms list. Meanwhile, a Conference on Port Development of the City of New York was assailing the President and the Secretary of State with telegrams—on the 8th October, and again on the 11th—protesting that the Administration's 'withdrawal of protection from trade with Italy was premature'. But this rather invidious intervention drew a sharp rebuke from Senator Nye; and a lead was given in the opposite direction by the announcement, on the 17th October, that the Ford Motor Company had discontinued the delivery of motor-trucks to the Italians upon the outbreak of war, and that it did not intend to resume delivery until peace had been restored. The Administration's policy of discouraging trade with the belligerents was emphasized once again in two statements issued on the 30th October by the President and by the Secretary of State respectively. After recalling his previous warnings, the President observed that

This Government is determined not to become involved in the controversy and is anxious for the restoration and maintenance of peace. However, in the course of the war, tempting trade opportunities may be offered to our people to supply materials which would prolong the war. I do not believe that the American people will wish for the abnormally increased profits that temporarily might be secured by greatly extending our trade in such materials, nor would they wish the struggles on the battlefield to be prolonged because of the profits accruing to a comparatively small number of American citizens. Accordingly, the American Government is keeping informed as to all shipments consigned for export to both belligerents.

On the 1st November it was made known at Washington that the negotiations for an Italo-American trade agreement, which had been started before the outbreak of war, had since been suspended.

In spite of these plain intimations of the Administration's wishes, and in spite, too, of the strong current of public opinion by which the President's policy was supported, there was a steep rise, in October and November, in the volume of exports, outside the arms list, from the United States to Italy and the Italian colonies—and particularly in the export of oil, cotton and scrap iron, which were all of them sinews of war without being munitions in the narrow sense. The American dealers and shippers were well aware that the President had no legal power to stop their business, and that, in the absence of an Ethiopian Navy and of a maritime blockade of Italy on the part of the sanction-taking Powers, the risks against which the President

declined to guarantee them were not very serious. The Administration, however, did not lose heart. In an address broadcast on his behalf on the 6th November, Mr. Hull told his countrymen that 'the imposition of an arms embargo' was 'not a complete panacea', and pleaded for the placing of a wider discretion in the President's hands. On the 15th November he was more outspoken:

The American people is entitled to know that there are certain commodities, such as oil, copper, trucks, tractors, scrap iron and scrap steel, which are essential war materials although not actually arms or ammunition or implements of war, and that, according to recent Government trade reports, a considerably increased amount of these are being exported for war purposes. This class of trade is directly contrary to the policy of the Government as announced in official statements by the President and the Secretary of State, as also is it contrary to the general spirit of the recent Neutrality Act.

By this time it was apparent, in Washington as well as in Geneva,<sup>1</sup> that oil—far more than anything on either of the two arms lists—was the essential instrument in Italy's conduct of her African war; and on the 21st November the United States Secretary of the Interior and Federal Oil Administrator, Mr. Ickes, called upon the American oil industry to suspend shipments to the Italians by its own voluntary act. Nevertheless, the increase in the volume of American oil and other exports to Italy and her colonies continued; and on the 22nd November Mr. Hull declared that an abnormal increase in the exports of certain commodities might force the Administration to conclude that these commodities were essential war materials.

At this point the internal struggle in the United States began to affect, and be affected by, the course of diplomatic events in Europe; and, in both directions, these reciprocal influences were discouraging. On the European side, the efforts that were being made<sup>2</sup> to

<sup>1</sup> See pp 275 *seqq.*, below.

<sup>2</sup> Conversely, the Laval-Hoare Plan was—in a partial and indirect, yet at the same time perceptible way—a consequence of the flouting of the American Government's wishes by the American oil industry; for one of the considerations which moved Sir Samuel Hoare to fall in so readily with Monsieur Laval's suggestions was the conviction, at which he had arrived before his departure from London for Paris on the 7th December, first that the powers which the American Government already possessed would not avail, even when stretched to their furthest limit, to check the flow of oil from the United States to Italy, and second that the American Government could not expect to obtain any extension of these powers from Congress. Sir Samuel Hoare is likely to have been well informed about this all-important American factor; for, while he was at the Foreign Office in Whitehall, he was in almost daily touch with the American Embassy in London; and he took the American Government into his confidence almost as fully as he took the self-governing

obtain an extension of the Co-ordination Committee's embargo list to include oil and certain other commodities were hampered by a belief that the Administration at Washington, for all its goodwill, did not possess—and had little prospect of obtaining—the powers which it would require if it was to take action parallel to that envisaged by the states members of the League of Nations; and, without a certain amount of such parallel action on the part of the United States, it was evident that any action taken by the states members of the League must prove ineffective. On the other side, an unfavourable impression was made upon American public opinion by the postponement, on the 25th November,<sup>1</sup> of the meeting of the Committee of Eighteen which was to have been held on the 29th to consider an extension, to oil and certain other commodities, of the League countries' embargo upon exports to Italy; a still worse impression was made by the news of the Laval-Hoare Peace Plan,<sup>2</sup> accounts of which began to appear in the American press on the 10th December; and it was on the 4th December—between these two inauspicious dates—that the consideration began at Washington of the proposed permanent United States neutrality legislation.

The new Bill (the Pittman-McReynolds Bill), which was introduced in both Houses of Congress on the 3rd January, 1936, incorporated the substance of the provisional joint resolution of the 31st August, 1935, while extending its range and at the same time giving the President a wider discretion in the additional fields of action. As before, the President, upon finding and proclaiming that a state of war had broken out, or was in progress, between foreign countries, was to declare an embargo upon the export from the United States to the belligerents, without discrimination, of arms and munitions, in the narrow sense; and these, as before, were to be listed. In this context, the President's discretion was on one point actually diminished; for instead of being provided that he 'may', it was now laid down that he 'shall', extend the embargo to countries subsequently involved in belligerency (a bad look-out for the United Kingdom were it to become the victim of an Italian attack on account of its execution of its obligations under Article 16 of the League Covenant). On the other hand, the new draft Bill added 'financial transactions with belligerent Governments' and 'export of articles and materials used for war purposes' to 'export of arms, ammunition and implements of war' as spheres for applying the principle of non-intercourse with

Dominions of the British Crown overseas. It may be presumed that this relation of confidence was reciprocal.

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 277-8, below.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 295 *seqq.*, below.

all belligerents, and in both these spheres the President was to have a freer hand. While financial transactions with belligerent Governments were, like the sale of arms to them, to be cut off automatically, the President was to have discretionary power to 'except from the operation of this section ordinary commercial credits and short-term obligations in aid of legal transactions and of a character customarily used in current commercial business'. As for the export of articles and materials used for war purposes, a restriction by quota, designed to keep the export of such commodities to all belligerents down to a 'normal' volume, was provided for; and here the President's discretion was to be very wide; for both the list of commodities to be rationed, and the date on which the rationing was to begin, were to be for the President to decide. Abortive though it was, this article is of sufficient general interest to deserve quotation:

Whenever, during any war in which the United States is neutral, the President shall find that the placing of restrictions on the shipment from the United States to belligerent countries of certain articles or materials used in the manufacture of arms, ammunition or implements of war, or in the conduct of war, will serve to promote the security and preserve the neutrality of the United States or to protect the lives and commerce of nationals of the United States, or that to refrain from placing such restriction would contribute to a prolongation or expansion of the war, he shall so proclaim, and it shall thereafter be unlawful to export, or attempt to export, or cause to be exported, or sell for export, such articles or materials from any place in the United States to any belligerent country named in the proclamation, or to any neutral country for trans-shipment to, or for the use of, any such belligerent country in excess of a normal amount in quantity and kind of exports from the United States to the respective belligerent countries prior to the date of the proclamation, such normal amount to constitute the average of shipments during a previous period of years to be determined by the President: Provided that no restriction or prohibition imposed under this section shall under any circumstances be applied to food or medical supplies.

An important discretionary power was also to be conferred upon Congress. The embargoes on arms and on financial transactions, and the rationing of certain other commodities, which were automatically to apply to all belligerents without distinction, might be applied discriminatively by a decision of Congress with the approval of the President.

On the 5th January, 1936, a rival Bill, in competition with this Pittman-McReynolds Bill, was introduced in the two houses of Congress by Senator Nye and his friends of the straiter isolationist school. This rival Bill was more stringent than the other in two main points:

the arms embargo was to come into operation automatically as soon as war broke out, and the rationing of key war materials to a 'normal' volume (to be calculated on a five-years' average) was to be made obligatory instead of being left to the President's discretion.

The potential importance of the intended new American neutrality legislation might be gauged from the terms of the President's message of the 3rd January, 1936, to Congress, which contained an outspoken and vigorous attack upon the European dictatorships; but the Pittman-McReynolds Bill soon ran aground among the shoals and reefs of Congressional politics. On the 15th January, 1936, the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Senate wrote into the Bill a passage underlining the maintenance of the doctrine of the freedom of the seas, and on the 22nd it struck out the original passage empowering the President to ration war materials to the belligerents if he found that 'to refrain from placing such restriction would contribute to a prolongation or expansion of the war'—leaving him power to act under this section only if he found such action to be in the national interests of the United States in the traditional understanding of what national interests were. On the 2nd February it was made known that, in giving confidential testimony before the Foreign Relations Committee of the House, Mr. John Bassett Moore—a distinguished international lawyer who had served as a judge of the Permanent Court of International Justice at The Hague—had described the Bill as 'a curious blend of homicidal with suicidal mania'.

The homicidal mania glares in the proposal to try to starve other peoples who engage in war, the suicidal mania gleams in the proposal to demoralize and destroy our commerce in order that peoples at war may not be nourished by what we produce.

This unkindest cut was really superfluous; for by this time the Bill was already doomed to die—not in retribution for its defects or even for its merits, but for fear lest the stubbornness of the battle that was now raging round it might make it necessary to postpone the adjournment of Congress. On the 8th February the project of introducing permanent legislation was abandoned in favour of an extension of the existing provisional legislation for a further term beyond the 29th February; and a compromise resolution, extending the term of the joint resolution of the 31st August, 1935, to the 1st May, 1937, with the addition of the financial embargo section of the Pittman-McReynolds Bill, but otherwise with the alteration of only a few words, was passed by the House on the 17th February and by the Senate on the 18th, and was signed by the President on the

29th, to come into operation at midnight of the 29th February–1st March.<sup>1</sup>

The two main verbal alterations were both restrictive of such discretion as the President had enjoyed under the resolution in its original form. It was now laid upon the President to issue his arms embargo proclamation as soon as a state of war existed, instead of his being allowed to wait until the war was in progress; and the 'may' was altered into 'shall' in the instruction to extend the embargo to states that might become involved in belligerency at some later date.

At the moment of signing the new Act, President Roosevelt issued a statement in which he once more appealed to American citizens voluntarily to restrict the volume of their trade with belligerents; and he had the courage to base this appeal frankly on moral considerations:

The policies announced by the Secretary of State and myself at the time of, and subsequent to, the issuance of the original proclamation will be maintained in effect. It is true that the high moral duty I have urged on our people of restricting their exports of essential war materials to either belligerent to approximately the normal peace-time basis has not been the subject of legislation. Nevertheless, it is clear to me that greatly to exceed the basis, with the result of earning profits not possible during peace, and especially with the result of giving actual assistance to the carrying on of war, would serve to magnify the very evil of war which we seek to prevent. This being my view, I renew the appeal made last October to the American people that they so conduct their trade with belligerent nations that it cannot be said that they are seizing new opportunities for profit or that by changing their peace-time trade they give aid to the continuation of war.

(viii) **The Reinforcement of the British Fleet in the Mediterranean and the Negotiations between the Governments of the United Kingdom and of certain other States Members of the League of Nations over Mutual Assistance**

As has been recorded elsewhere<sup>2</sup> in this volume, the persistent accentuation of the Italian threat of war against Abyssinia during the spring and summer of 1935 was accompanied, *pari passu*, by a rising note of hostility towards Great Britain in the Italian press. Long before Signor Mussolini put his aggressive design into action in Africa on the 3rd October, and some time before the League Council met

<sup>1</sup> For the eventual cancellation of the embargo on the export of arms from the United States to Italy and Abyssinia which had been imposed and maintained in virtue of the successive Congressional resolutions of the 31st August, 1935, and the 29th February, 1936, see p. 474, below.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 28, 42, 159, 177, above.



at Geneva, to deal with the by then imminent Italo-Abyssinian conflict, on the 4th September, British opposition to Italian policy was drawing down upon the Government and people of the United Kingdom a verbal drumfire of invective and menace from Signor Virginio Gayda and his *confrères*; and there were two reasons why these journalistic breathings of fire and slaughter could not be ignored by the Power against whom they were directed. In the first place, it was certain that, in the Fascist state, a press campaign could not be conducted without at any rate the permission and approval, and perhaps not without the initiative or even the instructions, of the Duce himself. In the second place, the British Empire was awkwardly entangled geographically, and therefore strategically, in the Italian plan of campaign against Abyssinia.

In order to reach their East African objectives all Italian troops and supplies must travel by sea through waters which the British Empire commanded—or at least had once commanded under the technical conditions of the pre-submarine and pre-aeroplane age. The Italians' direct route to Massawa from Genoa or Naples led them past the British naval base at Malta through a Suez Canal traversing the territory of an Egypt which was under British control; and an Italian convoy which was bound not for Massawa but for Bandar Qasim or Mogadiscio had also to pass the British possession of Perim Island, and the British naval station at Aden, on its way through the Straits of Bābu'l-Mandab. It was true that, if the Suez Canal and the Straits of Bābu'l-Mandab were barred, Italian convoys could still reach Mogadiscio and Bandar Qasim, at any rate, by the circumnavigation of Africa; but even on this grievously circuitous route they would have to run the gauntlet of both Malta and Gibraltar.

This British hold upon both the two exits from the Mediterranean had been a sore point in Fascist minds even before the Anglo-Italian conflict of wills in 1935 precipitated this previously rather theoretical strategic issue in a concrete shape. But the outburst of Italian hostility towards the obstacle that might be placed in the path of Italian empire-building by the presence of the British Empire in the Mediterranean and the Red Sea gave food for anxious consideration on the British side also; for in 1935 the political and strategic situation in these narrow seas and around their shores was very different from what it had been in the age when Great Britain had made herself the dominant Power there by making herself mistress, in succession, of Gibraltar, Malta, Aden, Cyprus, Egypt, British Somaliland and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.

The physical scale of such naval bases as Malta and Gibraltar,

which had been ample for the purposes of Mediterranean naval warfare during the three or four thousand years ending about A.D. 1900, had since been rendered inadequate by the rapid growth in the range and in the penetrative power of artillery. The experience of the War of 1914-18 had shown how unsafe the Mediterranean waters could be made for shipping by the new submarine weapon—even in the hands of an enemy who could only use the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman coastlines for his submarine bases. And, finally, the emergence of the air arm had placed the British naval dockyards at Malta under the shadow of the wings of the Italian Air Force, while Gibraltar could be similarly overshadowed at some future date by an air power installed in Spain or in North-West Africa.<sup>1</sup> It had thus become a doubtful question whether the British Navy could keep open for itself its passage via Malta from the Western Mediterranean to the Levant in the teeth of a hostile Italy, while Italy on her side perhaps stood at least as good a chance of being able to maintain, against any British attempts at interception, her communications with her North African colony of Libya: the former Ottoman provinces of Tripoli and Benghazi, which Italy had conquered from the Ottoman Empire in a war of aggression which she had launched in 1911.<sup>2</sup> Libya marched—albeit on a desert frontier—with Egypt; and the Dodecanesian Islands, which Italy had conquered from the Turks on the same occasion, flanked the British sea-routes radiating from Malta to Cyprus, Port Said and Alexandria. In order to make the British Admiralty feel uncomfortable in these circumstances, it was not necessary to demonstrate to them that the Italian Navy was capable of standing up to the British.<sup>3</sup> It would be enough to point out that

<sup>1</sup> Between the time when this chapter was written and the time when it was revised in proof for press, this sentence had been given additional point by the outbreak in Spain of a civil war of which the issue was not yet decided.

<sup>2</sup> See the *Survey for 1925*, vol. i, Part II, sections (i-iii) and (xii), and the *Survey for 1928*, pp. 283-4.

<sup>3</sup> In the General War of 1914-18 the performance of the Italian Navy had been notably poor, and it remained to be seen whether the *moral* of the *personnel* had been sensibly improved by the Fascist régime. On the technical side the Italian Navy in 1935 was strong in submarines and destroyers and 'sleds', but was wholly destitute of capital ships. To the layman, however, who had observed the British Admiralty's anxiety for the safety of their own capital ships after they had succeeded in concentrating them at Alexandria, it almost appeared as though capital ships were more of a handicap when they were in commission than when they were still safely on the stocks—like the two Italian 35,000-ton ships which were at this time in process of being built. As for the state of the British fighting forces in the autumn of 1935, it seems that they were seriously unprepared—perhaps not so seriously as was widely believed abroad, but seriously enough in the light of what was known in

all British warships, as well as all British naval bases, in the Mediterranean and the Red Sea would find themselves within range of aircraft operating from Italy's European and African territories, and that Italian land-forces stationed in Libya could attack the British Empire in Egypt—a country under British military occupation which was the British Empire's heel of Achilles, on account of the location of the Suez Canal which traversed Egyptian territory.

The mention of Egypt is a reminder that the British weakness in this part of the World in 1936 was political as well as strategic. Though by this date Great Britain had been in military occupation and in partial political control of Egypt for no less than fifty-four years, while she had been conducting the administration of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan for thirty-seven years, she had not yet succeeded in acquiring any regular title to her *de facto* position in either of these two portions of the Nile Basin, but had allowed her desultory endeavours to place her relations with Egypt on a comprehensive treaty-basis to peter out, time and again<sup>1</sup>—as though she had infinite time at her disposal—until the international storm which broke upon North-East Africa in 1935 overtook the British Empire still floundering there in this unsatisfactory juridical plight. Nor were Egypt and the Sudan the only weak points in the British Empire's political armour in the neighbourhood of the region which Signor Mussolini had chosen for his first essay in rebuilding the Roman Empire. In Cyprus the British were sitting on the head of a Greek majority which wanted to secede from the British Empire in order to incorporate itself into the Greek national state.<sup>2</sup> In the mandated territory of Palestine, which marched with Egypt on the opposite flank from the Italian colony of Libya, Great Britain had taken upon her shoulders a political task of almost unique delicacy and difficulty which was

Downing Street about German rearmament and German intentions. As regarded the prospects in the event of an Anglo-Italian war, the United Kingdom Government appears to have believed that the British Empire would be victorious, but that it would cost the British Navy the loss of six or seven warships to bring Italy to her knees. In Downing Street it was held—whether rightly or wrongly would never be known—that naval losses of this magnitude in a war incurred in fulfilment of British obligations under the Covenant of the League of Nations would be taken extremely badly by public opinion in England. It was also held that an exaggerated estimate of the extent of the British losses would gain currency abroad, and that such a situation would expose both Germany and Japan to a temptation—which might perhaps prove irresistible—to fish in the troubled waters.

<sup>1</sup> See the *History of the Peace Conference of Paris*, vol. vi, Part IV; the *Survey for 1925*, vol. i, Part III, sections (i) and (ii); the *Survey for 1928*, Part II B, section (i); and the *Survey for 1930*, Part III, section (ii).

<sup>2</sup> See the *Survey for 1931*, Part III B, section (iii).

apt at any time to generate an explosion of racial warfare.<sup>1</sup> And in Kenya Colony, which marched with Italy's colony of Somalia as well as with the Abyssinian Emperor's dominions which Signor Mussolini was planning to conquer, the Colonial Office in Whitehall had to deal with a conflict of interests between English settlers and native Africans which was as thorny as the Palestinian conflict between Jewish settlers and native Arabs.

Thus, while the British Empire might be an offensive stumbling-block in the Italian empire-builder's path, these Italian empire-building operations were, on their side, an alarming aggravation of the British Empire's troubles in some of its strategically tenderest and politically least healthy parts.

These considerations may serve to explain the movements of British warships which, on the 18th December, 1935, were described retrospectively in the following terms by Mr. Baldwin in the House of Commons at Westminster in answer to a parliamentary question asking the Prime Minister to state why His Majesty's Government had sent the British Fleet to Alexandria:

In accordance with the programme for its autumn cruise, the Mediterranean Fleet was due to leave Malta on the 29th August and proceed to ports in the Eastern Mediterranean. A number of visits to Italian ports were also included. In view, however, of the hostile press campaign against this country, which was then in progress in Italy, it became clear that visits to Italian ports would not be opportune, and it was consequently decided to confine the cruise to the Eastern Mediterranean. The Fleet left Malta for its cruise on its original programme date. The whole of the Fleet has never been at Alexandria; but, in view of the limited number of suitable ports in the Eastern Mediterranean, it has been necessary for a considerable proportion to remain there, as Alexandria is the only port capable of accommodating a large number of ships under winter conditions. (Laughter). Individual squadrons have, however, periodically made short cruises in neighbouring waters. (Laughter.)

As the laughter indicated, this statement was compounded with a certain economy of truth that perhaps calls for elucidation.

As early as the 27th August it was made known that the garrisons of Malta and Aden were being brought up to normal strength—in accordance with decisions taken eighteen months back—for the first time since the close of the War of 1914–18; but the first intimation

<sup>1</sup> See the *History of the Peace Conference of Paris*, Vol. vi, pp. 170 seqq.; the *Survey for 1925*, vol. i, Part III, section (vii) (a)–(e); the *Survey for 1930*, Part III, section (iii); and the *Survey for 1934*, Part II, section (vi). The fresh, and unprecedentedly violent, upheaval among the Arab population of Palestine, which drew British forces to Palestine from Egypt about the time when the Italian military campaign in Abyssinia was coming to a militarily triumphant end, will be dealt with in the *Survey for 1936*.

that the British Fleet in the Mediterranean was being reinforced and at the same time shifted from Malta to the Levant took the form of a denial, published on the 26th August, of rumours to that effect. In the official announcement on the 29th of the Mediterranean Fleet's second summer cruise, which was to begin that day, the programme of each ship was given, and, with one exception, every ship that was leaving Malta was scheduled for return to Malta on the 24th October. It was not, however, until the middle of September that it became known that the Mediterranean Fleet had been joined at Alexandria by a large part of the Home Fleet, which appears to have made its way, in the course of the first half of that month, from English to Levantine waters without the knowledge of the Royal Italian Naval Intelligence Staff. The arrival at Alexandria of two British warships from Chinese waters was reported on the 7th October, while on the 9th it was announced that the concentration of the Second Cruiser Squadron at Gibraltar was now complete.<sup>1</sup>

These rapid British naval dispositions in the autumn of 1935 had two effects. In the first place, they evoked an Italian military counter-move in the shape of a reinforcement of the Italian land-forces in Libya.<sup>2</sup> In the second place, they started a long train of diplomatic negotiations between the Government of the United Kingdom and the Italian Government on the one hand and the Governments of several other Mediterranean states members of the League on the other hand. In the Anglo-Italian negotiations, the aim on the Italian side was to persuade the British Government to reduce their naval concentration in Levantine waters, while the aim on the British side was to abstain from gratifying this Italian wish but at the same time to induce the Italian Government to refrain from action which might lead to an Italo-British war. The British negotiations with other Mediterranean Powers were conducted in the first instance with France, and later with Spain, Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey as well. In the Anglo-French negotiations, the British object was to obtain the most definite assurance possible, in the most concrete terms possible, of French armed support for the British Fleet in the Mediterranean

<sup>1</sup> Various estimates of the respective British, French and Italian naval strengths in the Mediterranean in the autumn of 1935 will be found in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 3rd October, 1935; *The Observer*, 6th October, 1935; the *Berliner Tageblatt*, 8th October, 1935; the *Prager Presse*, 10th October, 1935; the *Pester Lloyd*, 21st October, 1935. Thus widespread interest in the subject was noteworthy.

<sup>2</sup> This reinforcement was announced in a *communiqué* on a report made by Signor Mussolini at a Cabinet meeting held in Rome on the 14th September, 1935. 'In view of the unrest manifested by certain native exiles of Cyrenaica, our defences in Libya are now being reinforced.'

in the event of an Italian attack upon it, while the French aim was in the first place to circumscribe and diminish the danger of this catastrophe occurring, and in the second place to obtain from the British Government an understanding that any assurance of support which they might receive from France in the present crisis would entitle France to a corresponding assurance of support from Great Britain supposing that, in some other international crisis at some later date and in some different region, there were to be an inversion of the respective situations in which the two Powers found themselves during the last four months of 1935. The two sets of negotiations were carried on simultaneously. Of the two, the Anglo-Italian thread was the simpler, and it may therefore be convenient to disentangle it first, before attempting to unravel the rest of the skein.

The Anglo-Italian interchange of views was started on the 20th September, 1935, by a communication which the British Government apparently made to the Italian Government on their own initiative, and not in reply to any protest received from the latter. 'His Majesty's Ambassador in Rome called on Signor Suvich, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs . . . in order to communicate, in the name of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, the movements of the British Fleet and the reinforcements of men and material of the British garrisons in the Mediterranean, adding that they were not intended to imply any aggressive intention on the part of His Majesty's Government. He explained that such measures had been taken as a natural consequence of the impression created by the violence of the campaign against the United Kingdom which had been conducted by the Italian press during the last few weeks. Signor Suvich made an analogous communication and stated that he was authorized to declare to the Ambassador that Italian military preparations in the Mediterranean basin were of a purely precautionary nature and had no aggressive aims.'<sup>1</sup> These mutual assurances were evidently timely at a moment when one Italian newspaper, *La Stampa* of Turin, was publishing a cartoon depicting the corpse of Italo-British friendship burning on a funeral pyre. Thereafter, on the 25th September, in Rome, it was officially announced that Signor Mussolini had received the British Ambassador in order to take delivery of 'a personal message from the British Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sir Samuel Hoare, in which the latter, speaking as an old friend of Italy',<sup>2</sup> had 'shown himself particularly desirous of eliminating every

<sup>1</sup> British Foreign Office *communiqué* of the 22nd September, 1935.

<sup>2</sup> This was something more than a conventional phrase, since Sir Samuel Hoare had served on the Italian front in the War of 1914-18.

unnecessary misunderstanding between the two countries'. This message was communicated by Signor Mussolini to his Cabinet on the 28th, and in the *communiqué* on this Cabinet meeting it was stated that, in response, the Italian Council of Ministers had taken the opportunity of declaring once again, as they had already declared at Botzen,<sup>1</sup> 'that Italy's policy' had 'no aims, either immediate or concealed, which' could 'be damaging to the interests of Great Britain'. In his proclamation on the Italian national mobilization day, the 2nd October, 1935, Signor Mussolini professed an inability 'to believe that the real British people, which' had 'never had any quarrels with Italy', was 'prepared to take the risk of pushing Europe into the path of catastrophe for the sake of defending an African country which had been universally stigmatized as a country without a shadow of civilization'.

The head of the Italian state followed up this public reference to the state of Italo-British relations by conveying to the British Government verbally and informally on the 4th October, through the Italian Ambassador in London, a suggestion that there should be a symmetrical cancellation of the naval and military measures of precaution which the two Governments had respectively taken in the Mediterranean. This Italian proposal appeared to imply that an Italophobe British Government (as distinguished from an Italophil British people) was in a state of tension with the Italian Government over considerations relating to the Mediterranean Balance of Power; that this tension had nothing to do with Italy's breach of the League Covenant in her attack on Abyssinia; and that therefore the tension could be relieved by a symmetrical reduction of British and Italian forces in the Mediterranean while Italy's war of aggression in East Africa might go on unhindered as far as British policy was concerned—so long as the British Government were assured that the Italian Government had no designs against local British interests. Since this presentation of the relations between Great Britain and Italy was not accepted by the British Government, no formal reply to Signor Grandi's communication was made by Sir Samuel Hoare.

Nevertheless Signor Mussolini reiterated his proposal in an interview given on the 6th October to a representative of *Paris-Soir*.

If, in exchange for a partial demobilization of her fleet, Great Britain asks me for a reduction of our effectives in Libya, that may perhaps provide us with a basis for an understanding.

Great Britain's alarm at the reinforcement of our effectives in this

<sup>1</sup> See p. 177, above.

region seems to me unreasonable. . . . This quarrel which Great Britain has with us has really no common sense about it ; for a conflict between the two nations is absolutely inconceivable. Neither at close range nor at distant range, neither directly nor indirectly, do we wish to injure any British interest. Our colonizing activity in East Africa does not compromise either the prosperity or the communications or the security of any territory belonging to the British Empire. I am ready at any moment to prove what I say by giving unexceptionable guarantees of the peacefulness and even cordiality of our attitude.

This statement would appear to show that Signor Mussolini had genuinely failed to appreciate the moral indignation that had been evoked in Great Britain by his armed attack upon an unoffending neighbour in violation of the Covenant, and that he had also failed to apprehend the conviction, which was also widespread in Great Britain, that the maintenance of the reign of law in international relations, of which the Covenant was the instrument, was the supreme interest of the British Empire. The same lack of comprehension seems to have been shown by Monsieur Laval if it is true that, in the course of the Anglo-French negotiations which were in progress at the time,<sup>1</sup> he urged the British Government to fall in with Signor Mussolini's suggestion for a symmetrical reduction of British and Italian armaments in the Mediterranean without any accompanying proviso that the Italians should cease fire and withdraw behind their own frontiers in East Africa.

The wide diversity between the British and Italian views of the situation was not overcome either by a series of interviews which now followed, at Rome, between Signor Mussolini and the British Ambassador, or again by the personal intervention of Mr. Baldwin.

On the 18th October 'the British Ambassador saw the head of the Italian Government . . . and again reassured His Excellency that His Majesty's Government had no intention of taking any action, with regard to the present dispute between Italy and Abyssinia, beyond what was required by their collective obligations as a loyal member of the League, or beyond what was agreed to or recommended by the League in accordance with the provisions of the Covenant. Sir E. Drummond also explained that the attitude of His Majesty's Government in the matter was in no wise prompted by motives of self-interest. All statements to this effect were absolutely devoid of foundation and could only have been spread by persons who were either ill informed or desirous of making mischief'.<sup>2</sup> On the 19th

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 257 *seqq.*, below.

<sup>2</sup> British Foreign Office *communiqué* of the 20th October, 1935.



October, in a speech delivered at Worcester, Mr. Baldwin declared that

this conflict—if that be the right word to describe it—is no British-Italian conflict. It is a conflict, rather, between Italy and the League of Nations, for no isolated action has been taken by Great Britain and no isolated action will be taken by Great Britain

On the 30th October, at Rome, the question of a symmetrical reduction of forces in the Mediterranean appears to have been discussed between Signor Mussolini and Sir Eric Drummond again; and further exchanges of views between the same two statesmen on the same subject took place on the 5th and 12th November. On the 23rd of the same month Sir Eric Drummond saw Signor Mussolini again; and this time he was reported to have read to him a personal *aide-mémoire* from Mr. Baldwin in which the latter (if the report was correct)<sup>1</sup> sought to sound the head of the Italian state with a view to discovering what his response would be to proposals of the kind which eventually saw the light in the shape of 'the Laval-Hoare Peace Plan'. If Mr. Baldwin did make this move, it was prevented from going further by the storm which the Peace Plan aroused when it eventually became public; and, after this experience, the British Government appear to have been chary of continuing these direct Anglo-Italian exchanges of views which had now proved politically awkward as well as practically barren.

The Anglo-French question of mutual support in future crises, as well as in the present crisis, seems to have been raised in a conversation between Monsieur Laval, Sir Samuel Hoare and Mr. Eden at Geneva on the 10th September, 1935, when the three statesmen found themselves assembled there for the meetings of the League Council and Assembly.<sup>2</sup> The question arose out of an interchange of views about the application of sanctions against Italy in the event of her actually committing her threatened act of aggression; and an informal inquiry on the part of Monsieur Laval was quickly followed up by a diplomatic *démarche*. On the same day, the 10th September, the French Ambassador in London 'asked at the Foreign Office for information as to the extent to which the French Government might be assured in the future of the immediate and effective application by the United Kingdom of all the sanctions provided in Article 16 of the Covenant in the event of a violation of the Covenant of the League

<sup>1</sup> See *The Daily Telegraph* of the 26th November, 1935, quoting *L'Information* of the 25th.

<sup>2</sup> For the momentous decision that was taken by the same three statesmen, on the same date, to restrict to non-military measures the application against Italy of the sanctions laid down in Article 16 of the Covenant, see pp. 183-6, above.

of Nations and a resort to force in Europe—and' he 'referred in particular to the eventuality of a resort to force in Europe on the part of some European state, whether or not that state might be a member of the League of Nations'.<sup>1</sup>

Pending a formal reply to this inquiry, the Foreign Secretary held a consultation with the French Ambassador on the 17th, and the written answer was not communicated until the 26th. This answer opened with a reaffirmation of the pertinent passages of Sir Samuel Hoare's speech of the 11th September in the League Assembly,<sup>2</sup> culminating in his declaration that the United Kingdom stood, with the League, for the collective maintenance of the Covenant in its entirety, and particularly for steady and collective resistance to all acts of unprovoked aggression. In recalling this last passage in his note of the 26th September Sir Samuel Hoare now observed that

Each word in that sentence must have its full value. It is at once evident that procedure under Article 16 of the Covenant, appropriate as regards a positive act of unprovoked aggression, is not made applicable as regards the negative act of the failure to fulfil the terms of a treaty. Further, in the case of a resort to force, it is clear that there may be degrees of culpability and degrees of aggression, and that consequently, in cases where Article 16 applies, the nature of the action appropriate to be taken under it may vary according to the circumstances of each particular case. Your Government, as I am aware, already recognizes these distinctions. And similarly, in regard to treaty obligations, it is pertinent to recall that, as I have already said in Geneva, elasticity is a part of security, and that every member of the League must recognize, as the Covenant itself recognizes, that the World is not static.

The note closed with an assurance and a *caveat*. The assurance was that this British loyalty to the Covenant was not merely the good intention of the ephemeral Government of the day, but was the settled policy of the country. The *caveat* was that Great Britain's support of the Covenant would be conditional upon the attitude and the conduct of the other states members. The faith in the League, and the action on behalf of the League ideal, no less than the security in which this faith and these works were to bear fruit, must be collective.

Before answering the French Government's question in these terms, the British Government had already put a question of their own to the French. On the 24th September Sir Samuel Hoare addressed an oral inquiry to the French Ambassador in London regarding the attitude of the French Government 'in case a member of the League of Nations, who' declared 'himself ready to fulfil his obligations in

<sup>1</sup> Terms of the inquiry as formulated in the British note of the 26th September, 1935.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 187, above.

accordance with the terms of Article 16 of the Covenant and who' was 'making the necessary preparations to that end, should be attacked before the Article in question became applicable—that is to say, before the other members of the League of Nations were expressly bound to lend this member the mutual support provided for against a Covenant-breaking state. The British Government,' Sir Samuel Hoare told Monsieur Corbin, 'would be glad to know whether, in such a case, they might count on the same support from the French Government as they' were 'entitled to receive under paragraph 3 of Article 16, when the measures provided for in this Article' were 'applied'.<sup>1</sup>

This was an embarrassing question for Monsieur Laval, whose own conception of his 'difficult part' was—in the words of a broadcast address which he delivered on the 26th November, 1935—'to maintain intact a friendly collaboration with Great Britain, and to demonstrate the fidelity of France to the Covenant of the League, without weakening the bond of friendship with Italy that' Monsieur Laval himself had 'sealed in Rome on the 7th January' of the current year. So distasteful, apparently, did Monsieur Laval find the British question that he hesitated at first to give the affirmative answer that the British Government expected of him; and specious excuses for a negative answer were not lacking. One possible ground for a French refusal of the British request was suggested by the Italian thesis that the reinforcement of the British Fleet in the Mediterranean had been an act of British national policy which simply reflected an unwarrantable suspicion of, and hostility towards, Italy on the British Government's part. If he adopted this thesis in its entirety, Monsieur Laval might ask, with a plausible air of grievance, why France should be expected to help Great Britain out of a tight place into which Great Britain had wantonly thrust herself without previously asking the French Government's advice. If France had been consulted beforehand, she would have urged the British Government not to move a single ship; the British naval movements on the grand scale which had in fact taken place were already making Monsieur Laval's difficult task of conciliation more difficult than it need have been; and it was the last straw that France should now be asked to run the risk of being involved in war with her Italian ally on account of the British Government's prejudiced, precipitate, high-handed and impolitic behaviour. Short of taking so militant a line as this, Monsieur Laval could cite the unquestionable fact that the British naval concentration

<sup>1</sup> Terms of the British oral inquiry of the 25th September, 1935, as formulated in the French written reply of the 5th October.

in Levantine waters had neither been invited nor been approved by any organ of the League, and from this premiss he might argue, as a lawyer, that the British Government's action could not properly bring into play, for any of Great Britain's fellow states members of the League, any of those obligations that derived from their common subscription to the Covenant.

To such French arguments the British Government could retort, for their part, that even though the British naval movements might have been carried out on the British Government's individual initiative without authorization from the League, they were at any rate perfectly compatible with the terms of the Covenant, which did not inhibit states members of the League from making precautionary dispositions of their own armed forces, so long as they did not attack their neighbours, did not trespass on their neighbours' territory or territorial waters, and did not do anything that might constitute a threat to peace in the considered judgment of the Council taking cognizance of the question at the instance of some other state member in accordance with the procedure which the Covenant provided.<sup>1</sup> The British Government could also argue that it might be hazardous for all parties concerned to attempt to apply even the financial and economic sanctions of Article 16 against Italy without having some covering of force in reserve; that, *de facto* (whatever the juridical position might be), the British naval concentration in the narrow seas between Italy and East Africa provided, for the benefit of all states members, the indispensable 'sanction behind the sanctions'; that the threatening attitude of Italy bore eloquent testimony to the practical importance which this British naval guarantee would have in the event of the League's finding itself in duty bound to put Article 16 of the Covenant into operation against Italy; and that on this showing it would be unjust if Great Britain were left to confront, unaided by her fellow state members, an Italian attack which she would have drawn upon herself (according to this argument) because she had had the public spirit to take that action in the common cause which had to be taken by some state member or other if the application of Article 16 was to be made a practical possibility.

<sup>1</sup> If in French eyes it was legitimate for Italy to have reinforced her garrisons in her African colonies adjoining Abyssinia on the scale on which she had actually been reinforcing them since the opening of the year 1935 (see pp. 142 *seqq.*, above) then, *a fortiori*, it was legitimate for the United Kingdom to have reinforced her Mediterranean Fleet in September. In equity, Monsieur Laval's objection to these British reinforcements should have been put out of court by the unwillingness which he had persistently shown (see pp. 138-9, 144, 147, 149, 152-3, above) to entertain the Abyssinian complaints about Italian war preparations in Eritrea and Somalia.

The British question, which raised all these debatable points, was discussed between Monsieur Laval and the British Ambassador in Paris at two meetings on the 1st October; and the text of a reply was approved in Paris by the French Cabinet on the 4th and was handed to Sir Robert Vansittart in London on the 5th. The reply was in the affirmative; and its masterly draftsmanship showed that, if the diplomatists at the Quai d'Orsay had found it impossible to evade an awkward question, they had at least known how to take the legitimate revenge of turning a reluctant answer to account for their own purposes. Sir Samuel Hoare had given an opening for this adroit stroke of French diplomacy by couching in general terms (no doubt for reasons of tact) an inquiry which was really concerned with the particular contingency of an Italian attack upon the British Empire in the Mediterranean. This opening was taken advantage of, to the full, in the following passages of the French note:

The proposal of the British Government, if given a wide application, fills in very opportunely a gap in the system of 'collective security' to which our two Governments are firmly attached. In the interests of clearness it is necessary to define the conditions in which the proposed undertaking will be applied.

The obligation of assistance which is contemplated, binding the two Governments, must be reciprocal: that is to say, it must bind Great Britain with regard to France as much as France with regard to Great Britain. Moreover, it would be difficult to imagine that a state might or might not be regarded as having been attacked according to whether the attacks occurred on land, by sea, or in the air. The undertaking of assistance must therefore operate in each and every one of these cases. Finally, the mutual support from now on provided for in the third paragraph of Article 16 is equally due in case, in virtue of Article 17, Article 16 is applied. The preliminary assistance which the British Government proposes must therefore be equally assured whether the aggressor state is or is not a member of the League of Nations.

In a general way the contemplated undertaking ought to take effect only after a joint investigation has been made into the circumstances and agreement reached on the measures of precaution which these circumstances may justify as being strictly necessary in order to prepare for the carrying out of the Council's ultimate recommendations. This joint investigation ought to take place as soon as a state of political tension arises sufficiently serious to give ground for fear lest it lead sooner or later to the application of Articles 16 and 17.

Subject to these observations, and on condition of reciprocity, I am authorized to inform your Excellency that the French Government are ready to assume in regard to His Majesty's Government the following undertakings:

- (a) If either of the two Powers judges it necessary to take military, naval, or air measures, with a view to placing itself in a position to carry out, in case of need, its obligations of assistance arising out of

the Covenant of the League of Nations or the Treaties of Locarno, it will enter into consultation on this subject with the other Power, the procedure shall be similar if either of the two Powers judges it necessary to take military, naval, or air measures, with a view to placing itself in a position to meet, should it arise, a situation in which, under the Covenant of the League of Nations, or the Treaties of Locarno, it would be entitled to receive the assistance of the other Power.

(b) The fact that one or other of the two Powers, after this consultation and the resulting agreement, takes the measures referred to above shall not on that account be regarded as constituting a provocation such as would justify any failure by a third State to fulfil its international obligations

(c) If either of the two Powers is attacked on account of such measures taken after consultation and agreement, the other Power will render it assistance

I should be grateful to your Excellency to be so good as to place me in a position to assure my Government of the agreement of His Majesty's Government on all these points.

It will be seen that, in giving the French Ambassador the inevitable assurance of their agreement with his Government's affirmative reply to a question which they themselves had asked, the British Government were committing themselves to mutual French and British assistance—in the circumstances here in question—on land and in the air as well as on the sea, and to assistance in the event of an attack on France by Germany as well as in the event of an attack on Great Britain by Italy. Nor was this acceptance of the principle of reciprocity in the matter of mutual assistance the whole of the price which the British Government had to pay for a grudging and conditional promise of French assistance in the crisis of the moment. They were also compelled to acquiesce in a French veto upon any British initiative in the matter of policy. 'I wish', said Monsieur Laval in a statement made by him at Clermont-Ferrand on the 12th October, 'to reassure French opinion . . . Great Britain . . . has never considered that her action should be individual or should be developed outside the collective framework of the League of Nations'; and this statement of Monsieur Laval's was expressly confirmed by Sir Samuel Hoare on the 22nd October.<sup>1</sup> In this bout of diplomatic fencing, the French gained at least as many points as they lost.

Indeed, the French reply to the British inquiry of the 24th September had hardly been delivered before the French commitment which it involved became inapplicable to the international crisis of the moment owing to the coming into play of Article 16 of the Covenant as between France and the United Kingdom, *vis-à-vis* Italy, through

<sup>1</sup> See p. 283, below.

the League Council's finding of the 7th October <sup>1</sup> This change in the juridical situation moved the British Government to readdress to the French Government their old question in reference to the new circumstances. The story may be told in the words of a memorandum<sup>2</sup> in which the British Government subsequently retailed the history of the ensuing negotiations.

'On the 14th October, 1935, the Co-ordination Committee made a declaration recognizing that any proposals for action under Article 16 of the Covenant were made on the basis of paragraph 3 of that Article, by which the members of the League agreed, among other things, that they would mutually support one another in resisting any special measures aimed at one of their number by the Covenant-breaking states <sup>3</sup> The Committee of Co-ordination thus did no more than recall the terms of the Covenant. In practice, however, in the event of action of a military character being aimed by the Covenant-breaking state against a member of the League which 'was 'participating in economic and financial measures under Article 16, the application of this principle, universal as it' might be, would presumably call 'for the special co-operation of those members of the League who by reason of their military situation or their geographical position' were 'most immediately concerned. It was a question, therefore, in the present case, of ascertaining whether the states whose assistance was particularly required would be prepared to provide concrete assistance, and, if so, what would be the precise character of that assistance. His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom wished, in fact, to ascertain whether, in the event of special measures of a military character being aimed at Great Britain by Italy, the French, Greek, Turkish and Yugoslav Governments would be willing and able, should the need arise, to collaborate in resistance to such measures.

'His Majesty's Government decided, in the first instance, to ask the French Government whether they, like His Majesty's Government, interpreted paragraph 3 of Article 16 as imposing obligations such as those described above. This inquiry was put to the French Government on the 14th October, and in the course of an oral reply the view of that Government on this point was stated as follows:

To the question put by His Majesty's Government, namely, whether the French Government shares their interpretation of mutual support

<sup>1</sup> See p. 206, above.

<sup>2</sup> Text in the British White Paper *Ethiopia* No. 2 of 1936 [*Cmd.* 5072].

<sup>3</sup> See p. 225, above. This step was taken at the instance of Mr. Eden, who thus prepared at Geneva the ground for the question which was put in Paris, on the same day, by the British Ambassador.—A. J. T.

laid down in Article 16 between members of the League of Nations responsible for the carrying out of obligations resulting from that Article, the President of the Council and Minister for Foreign Affairs answers in the affirmative. The French Government fully considers Article 16 as implying complete solidarity of each of the members of the League of Nations in respect of that one of them who may have been attacked by the Covenant-breaking state if this attack has been clearly brought about by the application of the provisions of the said article, the execution of which shall have been decided in common.

'While this definition of the general principle was satisfactory to His Majesty's Government, there were certain points concerning its practical application to the present dispute which required elucidation, and further discussions therefore took place between the two Governments.'<sup>1</sup> One point which appears to have been raised by Monsieur Laval in connexion with his oral reply of the 14th October, just quoted, was the question whether, supposing that Italy did now attack the British Empire in the Mediterranean, France could be expected to regard such attack as having 'been clearly brought about by the application of the provisions' of Article 16, or whether she might not still be entitled to regard the Italian attack as a consequence of the British naval concentration in Levantine waters which had been carried out on the British Government's sole initiative before Article 16 had come into play. After raising this question, Monsieur Laval was reported to have asked the British Government to fall in with Signor Mussolini's proposal for a symmetrical reduction of British and Italian forces in the Mediterranean (without prejudice to the continuation of the Italian military operations in East Africa).

On the 16th October the British Ambassador in Paris appears to have informed Monsieur Laval that this last request was unacceptable to the British Government for the reasons which had already moved the British Government to reject the same proposal when it had been addressed to them direct from Rome.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, on the 18th the Ambassador conveyed to Monsieur Laval a message from London which did meet the second of the two stipulations that had been attached to Monsieur Laval's conditionally affirmative oral answer of the 14th to the British inquiry of that date. Sir George Clerk was able to assure Monsieur Laval once again that Great Britain did not intend to take independent action of any kind against Italy, outside the scope of the collective action which was being taken by the states members of the League who were represented on the Co-ordination Committee. Thereupon Monsieur Laval authorized the delivery of

<sup>1</sup> British White Paper *Omd.* 5072 of 1936, pp. 2-3.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 225, above.



an elaborate written reply to the British Government, and he 'expressed his opinion that the reply was a plain affirmative'.<sup>1</sup>

The crucial passages in this French note of the 18th October, 1935, ran as follows:

The French Government certainly interprets the obligation prescribed for members of the League of Nations towards any one of them who should, as a result of measures taken in application of Article 16, be exposed to attack by the Covenant-breaking state, as implying unlimited solidarity of action in the matter of military, air and naval assistance. . . .

Monsieur Laval had already had occasion . . . as a matter of supplementary explanation, to indicate that he naturally interpreted this obligation as being governed by the measures taken in fulfilment of Article 16, within the limits of its application

The British Government itself seems to share this view, since it offers the French Government the assurance that it will not take the initiative in any measure against Italy which would not be in conformity with the decisions taken, or to be taken, by the League of Nations in full agreement with France

Strengthened by this assurance—which, be it said, it never had reason to doubt—the French Government is in a still better position to confirm to the British Government, in the clearest and most precise manner, that in the concrete case contemplated by the most recent communication from the British Ambassador, that is to say, a possible attack by Italy upon Great Britain by reason of the latter's collaboration in the international action undertaken by the League of Nations and pursued in concert with France, the French support of Great Britain is assured fully and in advance within the framework of the interpretation which the Governments of the two countries are in agreement in placing upon the obligation provided for in Article 16 of the Covenant.<sup>2</sup>

'Agreement was thus reached between the two Governments'<sup>3</sup>—and it may be observed that this agreement did not consist solely in a mutual assurance, as between these two Powers, that they would fulfil towards one another the obligations which they had each taken upon themselves in subscribing to Article 16 of the Covenant, paragraph 3. The new agreement also established, as between the United Kingdom and France, a new principle which was henceforth to govern their action under the Covenant but which was nowhere to be found in the text of the Covenant itself. The United Kingdom and France were now agreeing together that the absolute obligation which the Covenant itself imposed upon each of them—as upon every

<sup>1</sup> *Communiqué* issued on the evening of the 18th October, 1935, by the British Embassy in Paris, after consultation with the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

<sup>2</sup> These passages are those quoted in the British White Paper *Omd.* 5072 of 1936, pp. 3–4. Down to the time of writing, in April 1936, there had been no publication of the full text of the French note of the 18th October, 1935.

<sup>3</sup> *Omd.* 5072 of 1936, p. 4.

state member of the League—to execute the terms of Article 16 immediately and completely, as soon as this article came into play, should be overridden and restricted, as far as either of them was concerned, by a new undertaking not to implement Article 16 earlier than, or in greater measure than, its implementation might be decided upon by the League as a whole in full agreement with the other of the two parties to this new Anglo-French understanding. Possibly this new understanding might be defended as a legitimate corollary—on the principle of ‘no taxation without representation’—to the provision in Article 16, which the two parties were now reaffirming, for mutual support;<sup>1</sup> but it must be repeated that if any authority at all could be found in the Covenant for this private Franco-British arrangement, it could only be found by implication. This point is of historical importance, since the *liberum veto* which either France or Great Britain was thus authorized to impose upon the individual implementation, by either Great Britain or France, of her obligations under Article 16<sup>2</sup> had a profound effect in restricting the scope and the efficacy of the application of sanctions against Italy during the ensuing months.

Meanwhile the Anglo-French agreement in principle which had been reached on the 26th October was promptly followed up by technical conversations between French and British naval, military and air experts on the practical problem of Anglo-French co-operation in the Mediterranean in the event of an Italian attack on the British fleet; and two French naval experts arrived in London for this purpose as early as the 30th October.<sup>3</sup> On the 28th November Monsieur

<sup>1</sup> This question has been touched upon on pp. 216 *seqq.*, above.

<sup>2</sup> This conferment of a *liberum veto* upon either of two states members by a private understanding between the two states in question would have been difficult to justify on the doctrine (however widely stretched) that any action taken by any state member of the League individually under Article 16 of the Covenant must be in accordance with ‘the general sentiment’ of the League. See the quotation, on p. 217, footnote 2, above, from an article in *The British Year Book of International Law* by Sir John Fischer Williams.

<sup>3</sup> With reference to these Anglo-French staff talks, the British Government noted the following point of fact in their memorandum of the 22nd January, 1936 (*Cmd.* 5072 of 1936):

‘The fact that these conversations have taken place between the French and British staffs has led in certain quarters to the suggestion that the conversations were concerned not only with the position in the Mediterranean arising out of the application of Article 16 of the Covenant, but also with the north-eastern frontier of France. His Majesty’s Government wish to take this opportunity of denying the truth of any such suggestion. The conversations between the staffs which have taken place have been confined entirely to joint action in the event of hostilities in the Mediterranean arising out of the application of sanctions in the present dispute. The conversations have never been concerned with any other contingency.’

Laval was reported to have made it clear to the Italian Ambassador in Paris that France would immediately come to the armed assistance of Great Britain if Italy attacked British forces or British possessions in reprisal for any British action resulting from a decision of the League. On the 18th December, in the House of Commons at Westminster, in answer to the question 'whether any intimation had been received from the French Government as to whether or not, in the event of an Italian attack on British naval forces, the French Admiralty would be in a position to give immediate effective support to the British Navy', Mr. Baldwin declared that 'assurances of French support in the event of an emergency, such as that mentioned by the honourable member', had 'been received from the French Government', as had 'previously been stated'. On the other hand, Sir Samuel Hoare, in his speech in the House of Commons on the 19th December,<sup>1</sup> declared that, down to that date, 'not a ship, not a machine, not a man' had been moved, in connexion with the Italo-Abyssinian dispute, by any other state member of the League except Great Britain.<sup>2</sup>

'Following on these conversations with the French Government, His Majesty's Government made similar inquiries, early in December, of the Governments of Greece, Turkey and Jugoslavia. The replies received from these three Governments, after consultation with one another, left no doubt of their readiness faithfully to apply all the obligations devolving upon them under the Covenant, in consequence of measures taken in application of Article 16. . . . On the 21st December the French Government were informed by the three Governments of the inquiries made by His Majesty's Government, and of the assurances given in reply; and . . . the Italian Government were also informed by the French Government of the fact that conversations had recently taken place between the French and British staffs. . . . Further, . . . in reply to inquiries made at Angora and Athens and Belgrade, the Italian Government were informed of the assurances

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 318-9, below.

<sup>2</sup> The French did not deny the truth of this statement in its application to France, but they had an answer; and this was that the French Navy could not be placed on a war footing without at least a partial mobilization which must extend to the land and air forces as well and which would have an untoward effect upon Franco-Italian relations. In the United Kingdom Government's belief, the mobilization of the French armed forces would have been spun out *in saecula saeculorum* supposing that Monsieur Laval had been called upon to honour his promise in consequence of an Italian attack upon the British Empire. So nervous were the French of compromising themselves in Italian eyes that, when the Chief of Staff of Admiral Fisher's Fleet went to Bizerta for a technical consultation with his French 'opposite number', the French

given to His Majesty's Government by the Turkish, Greek<sup>1</sup> and Yugoslav Governments respectively. The Turkish Government subsequently requested His Majesty's Government to furnish them with reciprocal assurances, which were duly conveyed to them. This request was also made by the Government of Yugoslavia, to whom, as well as to the Greek Government, similar assurances were given by His Majesty's representatives accredited to those Governments.<sup>2</sup>

The inquiries addressed by the Government of the United Kingdom to the Governments of Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia incidentally produced fresh evidence of the solidarity of the bonds uniting the several states members of the Balkan Entente and the Little Entente respectively. For the Greek and Turkish Governments' replies were made after consultation of, and in full agreement with, the Rumanian Government, and the Yugoslav Government's reply after consultation of, and in full agreement with, both the Rumanian Government and the Czechoslovak Government.

On the 22nd January, 1936, letters, putting the results of these negotiations on record, were addressed to the chairman of the Co-ordination Committee by representatives of the delegations, then present at Geneva, of all the seven states concerned.<sup>3</sup> It will be noticed that while the Governments which had given and received these mutual assurances included those of two countries—Rumania and Czechoslovakia—which had no seaboard on the Mediterranean,<sup>4</sup> there was one Mediterranean state member of the League, beside Italy, which was conspicuous by its absence. This absentee was Spain—a state member which, from the beginning of the conflict between the League and Italy, had been as nervous as France and Switzerland of crossing the aggressor's war-path. Copies of the letters addressed to the chairman of the Co-ordination Committee on the 22nd January, 1936, by the delegates of the United Kingdom, France,

authorities insisted on his coming in plain clothes and leaving again without staying the night, in order that his visit should escape Italian notice.

<sup>1</sup> The Greek Government not only 'informed the Italian Government', but 'at the same time' pointed 'out that the existence of a treaty of friendship between Greece and Italy did not relieve Greece of the obligation, explicitly reserved in the treaty in question, to fulfil undertakings arising under the Covenant of the League of Nations'. (Letter, dated the 22nd January, 1936, from the Greek delegation at Geneva to the Chairman of the Co-ordination Committee.)

<sup>2</sup> *Cmd.* 5072 of 1936, pp. 4-5.

<sup>3</sup> The texts of the seven letters are printed in British White Paper *Cmd.* 5072 of 1936. The British memorandum, telling the story of the negotiations, is annexed to the letter from Mr. Eden.

<sup>4</sup> Czechoslovakia, of course, had no seaboard at all, except in the imagination of Shakespeare.

Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia were forwarded by Senhor de Vasconcellos to Señor de Madariaga; and this communication drew from the Spanish delegate, on the 24th January, the following non-committal reply:

Having been informed of these conversations by the United Kingdom Government, the Spanish Government is of opinion that, as regards the general principle, Spain can only repeat that she will, as always, honour her engagements; and that, as regards the specific case of the Mediterranean, the Government of the Republic considers that, inasmuch as the hypothesis contemplated is linked with the application of sanctions, if it is thought necessary to study the case, it should be studied in the committees set up for that purpose at Geneva, so as to ensure that the article in question is applied as effectively as possible.<sup>1</sup>

The letter which had been addressed to Senhor de Vasconcellos on the 22nd January, 1936, by the French delegation at Geneva had contained the observation that 'these exchanges of views did not in any respect go beyond the scope of the common obligations publicly assumed by all the members of the League', and that they could not, 'therefore, give rise to any surprise or misunderstanding on the part of international opinion'. If this remark was intended to propitiate the Italians, it did not succeed in its purpose; for Señor de Madariaga's letter to Senhor de Vasconcellos was not the only diplomatic missive that was despatched on the 24th January, 1936. On the same date the Italian Embassy or Legation in the capital of each of the fifty-one states<sup>2</sup> participating in the application of economic and financial measures under Article 16 of the Covenant communicated to the Government to which it was accredited an identic *note verbale*<sup>3</sup> in regard to the British memorandum, relating to mutual support under Article 16, paragraph 3, of the Covenant, which had been communicated to Senhor de Vasconcellos on the 22nd.

In this note the Italian Government, 'while confirming the reserves and the protests originally made in regard to the measures decided upon against Italy in connexion with the first paragraph of Article 16 of the Covenant', now formulated 'the most formal reserves, and

<sup>1</sup> *Omd.* 5072 of 1936, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Fifty states members had taken steps to put Proposal No. 1 (arms embargo) into force, and this was the maximum number of states applying any one sanction. The fifty-first state member concerned was Salvador, which was applying Proposal No. 3 (prohibition of importation of Italian goods) but not Proposal No. 1. Guatemala brought the total of states which had accepted some or all of the proposals in principle up to fifty-two (see p. 217, footnote 3, above), but the Experts Committee reported in December 1935 that 'it would not appear to be clear from the documents before [the] Committee' that Guatemala had 'taken the necessary measures'.

<sup>3</sup> English translation in *Omd.* 5072 of 1936, pp. 8-11.

their own protest, against the interpretation and application of paragraph 3 of Article 16 of the Covenant, upon which the British memorandum' based 'the agreements of a military character arrived at between the British Government and other Governments'. In detail, the Italian Government argued that an Italian attack on the British Empire in the Mediterranean could not be interpreted as one which had 'been clearly brought about by the application of the provisions of' Article 16 of the Covenant, since the British naval concentration in Levantine waters had been made without the League being informed, and before there was any possibility of invoking Article 16. The Italian Government then went on to protest that the hypothesis of the British Empire being in danger of an Italian attack was 'not only arbitrary, but completely inexistent'. In the third place, they submitted that one of the stipulations attaching to the French Government's assurance to the British Government—that is, the stipulation that the British Government should not take the initiative in any measure against Italy which was not in conformity with a decision taken by the League of Nations in full agreement with France—involved something which was, at any rate so far, an unfulfilled condition.

Such a decision by the League of Nations has never been taken, since the application of economic and financial measures in connexion with the Italo-Ethiopian conflict has been the object of no discussion by the Council or the Assembly as such. The Governments of the states members applying the above-mentioned measures with regard to Italy have acted, instead, in pursuance of decisions which each of them has taken individually.

These debating points in the Italian note were not taken up either by the British Government or by any other of the fifty-one Governments addressed. On the other hand, the reciprocal assurances of mutual support, in the contingency of an Italian attack, which had been exchanged between five Mediterranean Powers, were an accomplished fact which could not be undone by verbal strokes of Italian diplomacy.<sup>1</sup>

In this piece of diplomatic by-play it was the British and not the Italians who had the best of it; and assuredly the Abyssinians would have been happy if they could have secured from their fellow states members of the League, for their defence against an Italian attack on Abyssinia which had been in full swing now for more than three months past, even a fraction of the support of which the British had

<sup>1</sup> The liquidation of these Mediterranean mutual assistance agreements, in consequence of the subsequent Italian military victory in East Africa, is recorded on pp. 512-3, below.

thus obtained assurances against the contingency of an attack upon the British Empire which was no more than a threat that had not yet materialized. The energy and ability with which the British Empire had effectively provided for its own security through the negotiations that have been described in this chapter, threw into conspicuous relief the half-heartedness and timidity which were being displayed by the British Government in the execution of their obligations towards Abyssinia under the Covenant. Considering the disparity between the British and Ethiopian Empires in intrinsic strength, and the still greater difference in the degree of the danger to which they were respectively exposed at the time, this contrast between the British Government's different standards of performance in doing their duty by their neighbour and in doing their duty by themselves threw a light upon Great Britain in which she assuredly did not shine to advantage.

**(ix) The Proposal to extend to Oil the Embargo on Exports to Italy; and the abortive Laval-Hoare Peace Plan**

The outwardly imposing concurrence of the Governments of some fifty states in the findings of the Council and Assembly of the League of Nations, and in the recommendations of the Committee of Eighteen and the Co-ordination Committee, between the 7th October and the 2nd November, 1935, veiled a cleft between two policies which were not merely distinct from one another, but were so different that, under the test of action, they proved to be barely compatible. The one policy, of which the leading exponent was the British Government, was to concentrate attention and effort, now that Italy had been found to be a Covenant-breaker, upon the task of frustrating her aggression by the application of some of the sanctions prescribed in Article 16 of the Covenant. The other policy, of which the leading exponent was the French Government, was to concentrate attention and effort—after, no less than before, the finding which had been made on the 7th October—upon attempts at a settlement of the dispute by conciliation, and, with this in view, to confine the application of sanctions to the minimum necessary for ‘saving the face’ of the League, without ever going to lengths at which the continuing attempts at conciliation might be seriously hampered or might even cease to be any longer possible. The British policy—which was carried on by Mr. Eden after it had been dropped by Sir Samuel Hoare—naturally led to a proposal to extend the embargo on exports to Italy (‘Proposal No. 4’) to additional commodities, and particularly

to oil, which rapidly showed itself to be the key-commodity for Italy's conduct of her war of aggression against Abyssinia. The French policy—which was bequeathed to Monsieur Flandin by Monsieur Laval—led, perhaps not less naturally, to a proposal to postpone consideration of 'the oil sanction' pending a supreme attempt at 'conciliation' in the shape of a peace plan which admittedly offered the aggressor a premium for having committed a breach of the Covenant, while it called upon his victim to be content with that much less than justice at the hands of the League.

In narrating the histories of the abortive oil sanction and the abortive Laval-Hoare Peace Plan, it will be convenient to describe the genesis of the oil sanction first, and then the genesis of the peace plan, before going on to record the eventual interlocking of two transactions which had originally appeared to be independent of one another.

The initiative in suggesting any extensions of the embargo on exports to Italy lay with the Committee of Eighteen, acting on the advice of its Sub-Committee on Economic Measures;<sup>1</sup> and, before making any concrete suggestion, the committee had to ask itself at least three questions: first, was the commodity under consideration one of vital importance to Italy for the prosecution of her war of aggression against Abyssinia? In the second place, was it a commodity the importation of which could be denied to Italy, through an embargo imposed solely by the sanction-taking states, in sufficient measure to make the blow sensibly felt by the Italians, or, in the case of this commodity, could Italy's requirements from abroad, in so far as they were at present being met by sanction-taking countries, readily find an alternative source of supply in the countries not participating in the sanctions? In the third place, in the event of the answer to the second half of the second question being in the affirmative, was there any prospect of these latter countries refusing to avail themselves of the opportunity to supply Italy with the commodity which the sanction-taking countries were proposing to deny to her?

The question of extending to additional commodities the embargo on exports to Italy ('Proposal No. 4') was raised in the Committee of Eighteen on the 19th October, 1935, in the course of a debate on the list of the articles that were to be covered by the proposal. This debate was opened by a statement from Señor de Madariaga (Spain), who said that he 'regretted that he could not accept paragraph 1 as it appeared in the draft proposal, because iron ore and scrap-iron

<sup>1</sup> See p. 225, above.



were included in the list, whereas the finished products, iron and steel, were not. He felt that it was so illogical to prohibit the export of iron ore and scrap-iron and to allow iron and steel to enter that, for his own part, unless convincing arguments were produced, he could not accept paragraph 1. . . . His view was that iron and steel products ought to be included in the list, or alternatively that iron ore and scrap-iron ought to be struck out'. In reply to this Spanish objection the French, British and Belgian delegates reminded Señor de Madariaga that the intention of the Economic Sub-Committee, which had drafted the list, had been to include only products that were controlled by members of the League. Iron ore and raw rubber were so controlled, and they had therefore been included. On the other hand, neither iron and pig-iron and steel nor the products of rubber fulfilled the condition for being placed on the list. These secondary products, unlike the primary materials from which they were derived, were to a large extent under the control of certain non-member states, and this was the reason why they had been omitted. This debate provoked an intervention on the part of the Canadian delegate, Mr. Riddell, on Señor de Madariaga's side. He 'had always held the view that any scheme of economic sanctions should be comprehensive', and 'he had never heard any argument as to why the committee should not go further than the question of raw materials, and place obligations on the countries, at least, that produced semi-manufactured goods'. The debate ended in Señor de Madariaga proposing 'that the committee should vote the list as it stood, though he could not guarantee what his Government would do'; and accordingly the list was adopted by the Committee of Eighteen unanimously on this occasion, and then by the Co-ordination Committee on the same evening (the 19th October)—with a repetition by Señor de Madariaga of his reservation 'on the inclusion of iron ore in the list, if iron itself were left to enter Italy freely'.

This point was duly brought up again by the Spanish delegate at a meeting of the Committee of Eighteen on the morning of the 2nd November in the course of the committee's consideration of special cases brought forward in replies from Governments to the Co-ordination Committee's recommendations up to date. The chairman now ruled that 'the committee was not competent to modify the list adopted by the Co-ordination Committee. It could only make additions to it—e.g. it could add iron and pig-iron, as the Canadian delegate proposed'. This ruling gave Mr. Riddell an opening for putting forward a concrete proposal. He 'reminded the committee that in Proposal No. 4, concerning the embargo on certain exports to Italy, they were

entrusted with the task of making suitable proposals to Governments on this subject. He imagined they were all agreed that the list of key products was not complete, inasmuch as such important products as petroleum and its derivatives, coal, iron and steel were not on the list. The committee had been successful in obtaining acceptances regarding the embargo as far as it went, and he thought that all the states members of the League were to be congratulated on that. He now ventured to propose that the substances he had named should be added to the list in principle, and that measures with regard to them should come into effect whenever the committee found that an embargo could be made effective. The inclusion of iron and steel in this way, he hoped, would also give satisfaction to the Spanish delegate. He accordingly suggested the following proposal:

In execution of the mission entrusted to it under the last paragraph of Proposal No. 4, the Committee of Eighteen submits to Governments the following proposal:

It is expedient to adopt the principle of the extension of the measures of embargo provided for in the said Proposal to the following products.

Petroleum and derivatives,

Coal;

Iron, cast iron and steel.

As soon as it appears that the acceptance of this principle is sufficiently general to ensure the efficacy of the measures thus contemplated, the Committee of Eighteen will propose to Governments a date for bringing them into operation

Mr. Riddell's proposal<sup>1</sup> was referred to the Economic Sub-Committee, which discussed it on the 4th November and referred it, in turn, to a drafting committee. On the 5th this drafting committee's version of the Riddell proposal was adopted by the Economic Sub-Committee with three amendments; and the proposal, thus redrafted and then amended, was adopted without further alteration, on the

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Riddell's action was subsequently disavowed by his Government in response to isolationist opinion which was especially strong among French Canadians. On the 1st December the Canadian Acting Premier, Mr. Lapointe, declared that Mr. Riddell's proposal merely represented his personal opinion and that the Canadian Government had not taken the initiative in any such action. A few days later it was announced that Mr. Riddell would not continue to serve on the Committee of Eighteen as he had been appointed a delegate to the Pan-American Labour Conference at Santiago de Chile. This belated disavowal of Mr. Riddell aroused considerable opposition in Canada, and on the 6th December the Premier, Mr. Mackenzie King, considered it advisable to make a statement containing assurances that Mr. Lapointe had only intended to make it clear that the Canadian Government were not committed to the proposal. The Premier also asserted that the attitude of the Government towards the League had never changed and that Canada might still support the addition of oil and other commodities to the sanctions list.

6th November, by the Committee of Eighteen itself as its 'Proposal No. 4 A'. The final text ran as follows:

In the execution of the mission entrusted to it under the last paragraph of Proposal No. 4, the Committee of Eighteen submits to Governments the following proposal:

It is expedient that the measures of embargo provided for in Proposal No. 4 should be extended to the following articles as soon as the conditions necessary to render this extension effective have been realized

Petroleum and its derivatives, by-products and residues.

Pig-iron, iron and steel (including alloy steels), cast, forged, rolled, drawn, stamped or pressed;

Coal (including anthracite and lignite), coke and their agglomerates, as well as fuels derived therefrom

If the replies received by the Committee to the present proposal and the information at its disposal warrant it, the Committee of Eighteen will propose to Governments a date for bringing into force the measures mentioned above.

In the course of the discussion preceding the adoption of the text by the Committee of Eighteen on the 6th November, the chairman explained that 'the draft would be accepted in principle, but' that 'it would be for the Committee of Eighteen to take practical decisions later'. In a circular letter of the 7th November the Secretary-General of the League communicated to the Governments the texts of the proposals—including 'Proposal No. 4 A'—which had been adopted for recommendation by the Committee of Eighteen during its second session (31st October–6th November, 1935); and in this letter he drew the attention of the Governments to the last paragraph of 'Proposal No. 4 A'.

It remained to be seen whether this vital proposal would actually be translated from the conditional mood into the imperative; and manifestly the answer to this open question would depend upon the action of three parties. In the first place, would those states members of the League which controlled some substantial fraction of the total world-supply—and enjoyed some substantial share in the export-trade to Italy—of the commodities on this additional list declare their willingness, for their part, to carry out this extension of the embargo on exports to Italy—supposing that the extension were judged opportune in respect of the other considerations that had to be taken into account? In the second place, would those non-member states which also controlled some substantial fraction of the world-supply of the same commodities take parallel action which might promote—or would they at least abstain from taking contrary action which might frustrate—the accomplishment of the sanction-taking

states' purpose of preventing Italy from obtaining further supplies of these commodities either from the sanction-taking countries themselves or from any alternative source? In the third place, would the imposition of 'the oil-sanction' against Italy be favoured or disliked—be helped or hindered—by the United Kingdom and France: two states members of the League which, in virtue of being Great Powers, were able to exercise a preponderant influence on the common counsels?

In the first of these three fields of action the response was not discouraging. By the 12th December, when the Committee of Eighteen at last reassembled for its third session, the Secretary-General had been informed by the Governments of ten states members that they were willing to place an embargo on the export of oil to Italy for their part. These ten were Argentina, British India, Czechoslovakia, 'Irāq, Finland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Rumania, Siam and the U.S.S.R.; and, of these, 'Irāq was producing at this time about 1·6 per cent. of the world's oil supply and was supplying 2·2 per cent. of the Italian imports of oil, the Netherlands (including Netherlands India) about 2·7 per cent. and 12·5 per cent., Rumania about 3·7 per cent. and 46·5 per cent., and the U.S.S.R. about 10·7 per cent. and 13·1 per cent.<sup>1</sup>

In the second of the three fields, which was occupied by the non-member oil-producing and oil-controlling states, the situation—at any rate at the outset—was not unfavourable either. For while the United States was producing no less than 59·1 per cent. of the world's oil-supply, she was only supplying about 6·3 per cent. of the Italian imports,<sup>2</sup> so that a League embargo on the export of oil to Italy would strike a heavy blow at the prosecution of the Italian campaign in East Africa even if the United States, short of cutting off her oil-exports to Italy completely, were to arrange for their effectual restriction to the 'normal' volume of the period before the opening of the Italian campaign in Abyssinia. The efforts made in this direction by the Administration at Washington before the disclosure of the

<sup>1</sup> The percentages of world supply are for the year 1935, and those of supplies to Italy for the nine months January to September 1935. The figures are taken from the *Report of the Committee of Experts for the Technical Examination of the Conditions governing the Trade in and Transport of Petroleum and its Derivatives, By-Products and Residues* (League of Nations Document General. 1936. 1). See also the *Survey for 1935*, vol. i, Part III, p. 384.

<sup>2</sup> This is the percentage for the first nine months of 1935. The figure for 1934 was 6·4 per cent. During the last quarter of the year 1935 American supplies rose to 17·8 per cent. of Italy's total imports, making the percentage for the year 10·5.

Laval-Hoare Peace Plan are recorded in another chapter of this *Survey*.<sup>1</sup>

It was in the third field of action—where the actors were the French and British Governments—that the attempt to put 'Proposal No. 4 A' into effect was not only starved of the support which it duly received from the Governments of ten other states members,<sup>2</sup> but was actively hindered by manœuvres which—as far, at any rate, as concerns Monsieur Laval's share in the business—can only be described as acts of political sabotage.

This backstairs drama began when it was reported on the 19th November at Geneva that the chairman of the Committee of Eighteen, Senhor de Vasconcellos, was proposing to convene the committee for an early date—perhaps the 25th or the 27th instant<sup>3</sup>—in order to consider, first and foremost, whether 'Proposal No. 4 A', which had already been adopted in principle, could not now be applied in practice. There was an immediate sounding of the alarm in the Italian press—a reaction which clearly indicated that the sanction-taking countries, if they genuinely desired to make economic sanctions fulfil the intention of Article 16 of the Covenant, were on the right road in moving to extend the existing embargo on exports to Italy to oil and the other additional commodities which had been suggested by Mr. Riddell. On the 22nd November it became known that the Committee of Eighteen had now been definitely convened by Senhor de Vasconcellos, with the agenda above mentioned, for the 29th. As early as the 24th, however, it was being rumoured in Paris that Monsieur Laval had been informed by the Italian Ambassador, Signor Cerruti, that an extension of the embargo on exports to Italy to include oil might be expected to have an untoward effect upon Italo-French relations; and it was also being rumoured that under the influence of this Italian hint—or threat—Monsieur Laval had suggested to the British Ambassador in Paris that the forthcoming meeting of the Committee of Eighteen should be postponed from the 29th November to some later date unspecified—the nominal pretext for this request for postponement being that on the 29th it would be impossible for Monsieur Laval to put in a personal appearance in

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 242-4, above.

<sup>2</sup> It is significant that neither the United Kingdom nor France appeared in the list of states members that had given notice, by the 10th December, 1935, of their readiness, as far as they were concerned, to put 'Proposal No 4 A' into effect.

<sup>3</sup> In messages despatched from Geneva on the 20th November, 1935, the correspondent of *Le Temps* gave the 25th November and the correspondent of *The Times* the 27th November [the word 'December', which appears in *The Times* here, is presumably a slip] as the proposed date.

Geneva on account of parliamentary engagements in Paris. These rumours appear to have been in accordance with the facts;<sup>1</sup> and it would also seem that Monsieur Laval secured at least the acquiescence of the British Government in his plan of procrastination. Having thus covered his rear, the French Prime Minister now took swift isolated action against the Committee of Eighteen. On the morning of the 25th he put through from Paris a telephone call to Senhor de Vasconcellos and begged him to agree to a postponement of the committee meeting as a personal favour to Monsieur Laval himself (giving the same parliamentary pretext that he had given to the British Ambassador in Paris, but not mentioning to Senhor de Vasconcellos that he had consulted the British Government or that he had been put under pressure by the Italian Government). To this request Senhor de Vasconcellos deferred with some reluctance, and on the understanding that the delay would be a matter of not more than a few days; and the change of programme was promptly announced at Geneva in the following *communiqué*:

Monsieur Pierre Laval, President of the Council of France, has asked that the forthcoming meeting of the Committee of Eighteen may be postponed for a few days because he is anxious to attend the meeting in person and finds himself unable to be at Geneva on the 29th November. This request has been taken into consideration by Senhor de Vasconcellos, the chairman of the committee for the co-ordination of the measures to be taken on the strength of Article 16 of the Covenant; and Senhor de Vasconcellos has decided to adjourn the session and to wait until the 29th November before fixing a new date—which will be an early one—for calling the committee together. The delay of several days which thus arises will be taken advantage of for the holding of the meeting of the Committee of Experts<sup>2</sup> which is due to meet on the 27th November and which will now be able to finish its work before the meeting of the Committee of Eighteen begins.

Thus Monsieur Laval's intervention, in Italy's interest, for the obstruction of the proposed oil sanction had been as effective as it had been prompt. Yet the alarm and resentment which had been excited in Italy did not die down. So far from that, it was announced in Rome on the 27th November that, in view of the proposal for an oil sanction, the Italian Government—notwithstanding the satisfactory news of the postponement of the date of the forthcoming meeting of the Committee of Eighteen—had found it advisable to order certain troop movements and to cancel certain recently announced permits

<sup>1</sup> For light on the inner history of Monsieur Laval's intrigues of the 24th–25th November 1935, see *The Manchester Guardian* of the 26th November, 1935, and the *Journal des Nations* of the same date.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 233, above.

of three months' leave for men now serving with the colours. The reference to troop movements was deliberately couched in general terms which left it uncertain whether the threat was to put pressure on Great Britain by reinforcing the Italian army on the Libyan frontier of Egypt or whether it was to put pressure on France by remanning, on the Italian side, the Italo-French frontier along the Alps from which both the Italian and the French Government had removed the bulk of their forces since the conclusion of the Pact of the 7th January, 1935.<sup>1</sup> At the same time there was talk in Rome—talk which was no doubt carefully disseminated in order to reach the ears of foreign newspaper correspondents—of retaliating for the imposition of the oil sanction, supposing that it were eventually to be imposed, by making war on the British Empire, and in particular by a surprise attack from the air upon the British fleet in the Mediterranean.<sup>2</sup>

Next to Italy, the country in which the prospects of the oil sanction excited the greatest interest at the moment was the United States; and here the news of the postponement was received with a disfavour which was to turn into the still stronger reprobation that was evoked by 'the Laval-Hoare Peace Plan'.<sup>3</sup>

When the 29th November arrived, Monsieur Laval appears once more to have telephoned from Paris to Senhor de Vasconcellos at Geneva, and to have asked him to fix, for the next meeting of the Committee of Eighteen, a date not earlier than the 11th December. This time Senhor de Vasconcellos appears to have insisted upon reserving his reply until he had had time to consult the British Government; but, finding that the British Government were disposed to acquiescence in Monsieur Laval's suggestion, Senhor de Vasconcellos finally accepted the 12th December; and accordingly the committee was convened for that day, and a public announcement was made on the 29th November at Geneva to that effect. Much was to happen in Paris and London before the appointed day arrived.

Meanwhile Monsieur Laval received a diplomatic payment on

<sup>1</sup> See the *Survey for 1935*, vol. i, Part I, section (v).

<sup>2</sup> The situation in this respect at the turn of November and December was described as follows by Sir Samuel Hoare in his speech in the House of Commons at Westminster on the 19th December:

About a fortnight ago it was clear that a new situation was about to be created by the question of the oil embargo. It seemed clear that, supposing an oil embargo were to be imposed and that the non-member states took an effective part in it, the oil embargo might have such an effect upon the hostilities as to force their termination. Just because of the effectiveness of the oil sanction, provided that the non-member states had a full part in it, the situation immediately became more dangerous from the point of view of Italian resistance.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 245, above.

account at Italian hands, for in Rome on the 29th November it was announced that there had been no movements of Italian troops in the direction of the French frontier. On the 30th November, on the other hand, the representatives at Geneva of certain states members of the Committee of Eighteen, other than France and the United Kingdom, were informed verbally by the secretary of the Italian delegation at Geneva, Signor Bova Scoppa, that an implementation of 'Proposal No. 4 A' would be regarded by the Italian Government as 'an unfriendly act'.

In Paris, on the 30th November, there was another consultation between Monsieur Laval and the Italian Ambassador; and on this occasion Monsieur Laval is reported to have warned Signor Cerruti that France might find herself unable, in the last resort, either to frustrate or to hold aloof from the imposition of the oil sanction. On this ground Monsieur Laval seems to have impressed upon Signor Cerruti the expediency—in Italian as well as in French interests—of taking advantage of the twelve days' 'breathing-space', which Monsieur Laval's diplomacy had secured, in order to arrange in the meantime an East African peace settlement which might bring to Signor Mussolini the fulfilment of a considerable part of his war aims. If this was what really passed between Monsieur Laval and Signor Cerruti on the 30th November, their meeting on that occasion saw the actual genesis of the Laval-Hoare Peace Plan of the 8th December, 1935. The conception of the plan, however, can be traced back to the morrow of the Italian invasion of Abyssinia on the 3rd October—or at any rate to the morrow of the finding, on the 7th October, by France and the United Kingdom, in agreement with twelve other states represented on the Council of the League, that Italy had committed a breach of the Covenant.

The ultimate origin of the Laval-Hoare Peace Plan is to be found in the thesis—which Monsieur Laval consistently advocated throughout—that to work for a settlement by conciliation remained the duty of the League, and therefore the duty of the Governments of all states members, after, no less than before, the Italian breach of the Covenant had been committed and been certified. The potency of this thesis, as a diplomatic weapon in Monsieur Laval's hands, lay in its ambiguity. If it simply meant that a process of discussion and negotiation would be a necessary element in bringing about an eventual restoration of peace in East Africa within the framework of the League and on the basis of the Covenant, then Monsieur Laval's formula was a not very important truism. Alternatively, however, the formula might be interpreted, not as calling for conciliatory



diplomatic action in the service of the Covenant, but as drawing a distinction between the method of conciliation on the one hand and the method of action through the Covenant on the other, and if, as turned out to be the fact, it was this that Monsieur Laval really did mean when it came to the point, then his thesis was as ugly in reality as it was attractive in appearance. For to suggest to states members of the League a course which was an alternative to the application of the Covenant was really to suggest that they should break their pledge to act as was prescribed in the Covenant. Since the Covenant was a treaty into which all states members of the League had entered of their own free will, after due deliberation, such a suggestion would be objectionable in itself and *a priori*; but it would become positively sinister if the method of conciliation promised to enable a Covenant-breaker to profit by his breach of faith in some way which a strict and honourable application of the Covenant would rule out. This was actually the shape which 'conciliation' took in the Laval-Hoare Peace Plan of the 8th December, 1935; but it may be doubted whether Monsieur Laval could have achieved his master-stroke of implicating Sir Samuel Hoare in his scheme if the convenient ambiguity of his formula had not allowed him to air it in advance, almost ostentatiously, as something not only harmless but beneficent and even morally obligatory.

It will be convenient to describe first how Monsieur Laval played his own hand, and then how, with consummate diplomatic skill, he drew Sir Samuel Hoare into an ever closer partnership in a game which the British Secretary of State seems never fully to have understood until he found himself being driven out into the wilderness as the scapegoat for a policy which had been suddenly shown up in its true colours by its sensational and shocking denouement.

As early as the 15th October, 1935, Monsieur Laval was reported<sup>1</sup> to have laid before the Italian Ambassador in Paris a suggestion for peace terms which already contained the gist of the peace plan of the 8th December—if it is true that Monsieur Laval proposed on that day to Signor Cerruti that Abyssinia should be induced to cede Tigre, the Ogaden and even Harrar to Italy in exchange for receiving an outlet to the sea at Zeila (a port which, it may be noted in passing, lay in British, and not in French, Somaliland!). It was presumably in response to this overture that Monsieur Laval was informed<sup>2</sup> on the 16th October of the tenor of the Italian Government's minimum

<sup>1</sup> See *The Daily Telegraph*, 16th October, 1935.

<sup>2</sup> Statement by Signor Mussolini in the Chamber of Deputies at Rome on the 7th December, 1935.

demands. On the other hand, on the 23rd October, Monsieur Laval told the Foreign Affairs Commission of the French Chamber that, while his policy was—side by side with the maintenance of the Covenant—to do everything possible with a view to conciliation and peace, he held that in any case the solution must be found within the framework of the Covenant. On the 24th October a rumour that Monsieur Laval, at a meeting with the British Ambassador that day, had communicated to him some Italian peace terms which the Italian Ambassador had communicated to Monsieur Laval himself the day before, was officially denied by both the British Embassy and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. But the terms of this *démenti* did not exclude the possibility that the rumour might be incorrect in form rather than in substance; and on the 29th October the Paris correspondent of *The Daily Herald* reported that a Franco-British pair of experts—Monsieur de St. Quentin and Mr. Peterson—had produced in Paris a peace plan which had already been approved by Monsieur Laval and had subsequently been forwarded to Sir Samuel Hoare with a view to its eventual submission to the League. The terms of this plan, as outlined in this message and published in *The Daily Herald* on the 30th October, correspond with those of the plan of the 8th December so exactly that the resemblance cannot be explained away.

There had, indeed, already been indications of at least one current in Sir Samuel Hoare's policy that was running parallel with the main stream of Monsieur Laval's.

At Rome, for instance, on the 18th October, after a meeting on that day between Signor Mussolini and Sir Eric Drummond, a semi-official statement was published to the effect that 'conversations' were 'proceeding through the normal diplomatic channels between Paris and Rome and Paris and London. For the moment there' was 'nothing specific, but the fact that these conversations' were 'continuing' showed 'that the doors' were 'not closed'. Sir Samuel Hoare himself, speaking in the House of Commons at Westminster on the 22nd October, made a speech which, while not proclaiming any positive change in the policy which the speaker had enunciated at Geneva on the 11th September,<sup>1</sup> was nevertheless perceptibly different from his Geneva speech both in emphasis and in tone. The tone was criticized by Sir Herbert Samuel for not being sufficiently robust; and the emphasis was placed, *more Lavaliano*, upon the hope of a settlement by negotiation before the pending sanctions would have time to come into effect, rather than upon a determination to

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 183 *seqq.*, above.

frustrate the act of aggression by the imposition of whatever sanctions might be required in order to produce that result.

His Majesty's Government made it clear from the start that they were ready to perform their full duties as a member of the League, but that they will take no isolated action whatever, and, as Monsieur Laval has recognized in his recent speech at Clermont-Ferrand, we have never even proposed to the French Government the consideration of any military measures. . . . There is still a breathing-space before this economic pressure can be applied. Can it be used for another attempt at . . . a settlement? Italy is still a member of the League. I welcome that fact. Cannot this eleventh hour be so used as to make it unnecessary for us to proceed further along the unattractive road of economic action against a fellow member, an old friend, and a former ally?

Another point in this speech of Sir Samuel Hoare's was taken up on the 24th October, in the House of Lords, by Lord Cecil, who commented, with some surprise, upon the Foreign Secretary's assertion 'that no change had taken place in the foreign policy of the country since the beginning of the year'. Lord Cecil expressed his own dissent from Sir Samuel Hoare's view.

He could not doubt that there had been a great change. How otherwise could the reception of Sir Samuel Hoare's speech at Geneva be accounted for? It had been greeted everywhere as a new departure—a new statement showing that Great Britain was again taking her rightful place in the leadership of the World.

There was a note of anxiety in Lord Cecil's speech; and indeed by this time there was a widespread uneasiness in Great Britain lest Mr. Baldwin's Government might be intending—when once they had secured the expected renewal of their mandate from the electorate at the polls on the 14th November—to relax or even to abandon that support of the Covenant to which Sir Samuel Hoare at Geneva had committed his colleagues in London (presumably with their previous consent) on the 11th September, and which Ministers had since then taken as the principal plank for their electioneering platform. In a speech which he made to his constituents in Chelsea on the 30th October—the day before paying his next visit to Geneva in order to attend the second session of the Co-ordination Committee—Sir Samuel Hoare alluded to some of the public expressions of these misgivings and contended that they were not being put forward in good faith.

I wanted to take the opportunity that is always offered by these important meetings of the League to have a talk with Monsieur Laval, the French Prime Minister, and some of the other prominent Ministers of the member states. What could be more natural and simple than

these facts? Yet our opponents are trying to make ignorant people believe that there is some disreputable intrigue behind this visit and that it means some sinister change of policy. As to the change of policy, let them once and for all get it out of their heads that there has ever been a change of policy in the British attitude towards the Abyssinian controversy or that there will be a change of policy. Our policy has always been perfectly simple—namely, loyalty to the League and readiness to help with any honourable settlement of the dispute that is acceptable to the three parties concerned—the League, Italy and Abyssinia. That has always been our policy. It always will be our policy, and it is the policy that I shall support at Geneva. In the meanwhile, let us pay no attention to these whispers and innuendoes. Let us take them at their real worth. They are electioneering, pure and simple, and nothing more. . . . I have spoken in Chelsea about the ridiculous air of mystery that some of these critics are creating about the peace talks. Of course, what they wish is that the electors should be induced to believe that we are trying to side-track the League and do a disreputable deal with Italy behind its back. I have already said that there is no foundation whatever for this malicious suspicion. There is nothing to conceal about what has been happening, nor is there anything suspicious about it. It is common property that several Governments have recently been considering the possibilities of a peaceful settlement, and that the British and the French Governments in particular have been exchanging their views as to what might form the basis of a future negotiation. In order that we should fully understand each other's views, the head of the Abyssinian Department at the Foreign Office has been in Paris discussing a number of complicated details with the officials of the French Foreign Office. For the time being we are engaged in this exchange of views. Nothing has yet emerged, and if anything definite does emerge we shall, of course, take the earliest opportunity to report to the League. If eventually a settlement is proved to be possible, that settlement would, as I have already stated over and over again, be within the framework of the League and would have to be satisfactory to the three parties concerned—the League, Italy and Abyssinia. That is the whole story.

There seems, however, to have been one material point in the story, up to date, which was not mentioned in this speech (and indeed hardly could have been made public with propriety at this stage). Before the end of October, Sir Samuel Hoare had sent a long despatch to the British Minister at Addis Ababa, Sir Sidney Barton, instructing him to press upon the Emperor Haile Selassie the advisability of his consenting to start peace negotiations for a settlement by compromise. Sir Samuel Hoare had been moved to take this step by a belief that Abyssinia's military prospects were even darker than they appeared to be to observers without 'inside knowledge'. The Emperor, however, proved unwilling to follow the advice of the British Secretary of State. These undivulged facts in the story, as

far as it had unfolded itself by the 30th October, throw light upon a sequel which could not be fitted, even on the most charitable interpretation, into Sir Samuel Hoare's reassuring version of the plot.

On the 1st November Sir Samuel Hoare duly arrived at Geneva; Baron Aloisi arrived on the same day; and each of them in turn went into consultation with Monsieur Laval. Baron Aloisi appears simply to have told Monsieur Laval that Italy was unwilling to accept the settlement proposed by the Committee of Five;<sup>1</sup> and Monsieur Laval appears to have induced Sir Samuel Hoare to abet him in instigating the Belgian delegate, Monsieur van Zeeland, to throw out, at this session of the Co-ordination Committee, a suggestion which would have the effect of transferring the task of 'conciliation' from the Council<sup>2</sup> to a smaller number of perhaps more pliant hands.

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Monsieur Laval's part was to change the subject from the application of sanctions to the prosecution of conciliation:

We have all—and I should like to emphasize this point on the very day on which we are taking an important decision—another duty to fulfil, one that is dictated by the spirit of the Covenant. We must endeavour to seek, as speedily as possible, for an amicable settlement of the dispute. The French Government and the United Kingdom Government are agreed that their co-operation shall be exerted also in this sphere. This duty is particularly imperative for France, which, on the 7th January last, signed a treaty of friendship with Italy. I shall therefore stubbornly pursue my attempts—from which nothing will deter me—to seek for elements that might serve as a basis for negotiations. It is thus that I have initiated conversations—without the slightest intention, however, of putting the results into final shape outside the League. It is only within the framework of the League that proposals can be examined and decisions reached.

Sir Samuel Hoare spoke second in support of Monsieur Laval:

I have listened with great sympathy and full approval to the words uttered by Monsieur Laval. He has accurately expressed what is in the

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 193-7, above.

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minds of all of us. On the one hand, as loyal members of the League, we feel it our bounden duty to carry out our obligations and to undertake the duty imposed upon us by the Covenant. On the other hand, we are under a no less insistent obligation to strive for a speedy and honourable settlement of the controversy. It is common talk that, during the last few days, there have been conversations taking place between Rome, Paris and London on the possibilities of such a settlement. There is nothing mysterious or sinister about these discussions. It is the duty of all of us to explore the road of peace. This is what we have been doing and this is what we shall continue to do. Up to the present the conversations have been nothing more than an exchange of tentative suggestions. They have had, as yet, no positive outcome. There is therefore nothing to report. If and when these suggestions take a more definite form, we shall take the earliest opportunity to bring them before the Council in the most appropriate manner. Nothing is further from our minds than to make and conclude an agreement behind the back of the League. Nothing is further from our minds than to make an agreement that is not acceptable to all three parties to the controversy. For let us not forget that there are three parties in the controversy—the League, Ethiopia and Italy.

Thereupon Monsieur van Zeeland, after an exordium in praise of the two previous speakers, made haste to say his transparently appointed lines:

In the circumstances, does it not seem right that efforts towards conciliation should, from this moment, be placed under the auspices and within the framework of the League itself? Since the responsible leaders of two great countries have already devoted a large part of their time and their talents to this task, why should the League not entrust to them the mission of seeking, under its auspices and control and in the spirit of the Covenant, the elements of a solution which the three parties at issue—the League, Italy, and Ethiopia—might find it possible to accept? If this suggestion were to meet with the approval of the members of this assembly, I think that the moral position of the League would be still further strengthened and that the chances of peace would be increased.

In the minutes of the Co-ordination Committee it was recorded that 'the Committee took note of the desire expressed by the Belgian delegate'. On the mind of Sir Samuel Hoare a more positive result was imprinted. 'This proposal', he telegraphed from Geneva to London on the 2nd November itself, 'was warmly supported by most of the other speakers and opposed by none. It was clear that it represented the unanimous sense of the meeting.'<sup>1</sup> On the lips of the diplomatists and in the despatches of the newspaper correspondents, it was asserted that the Co-ordination Committee had given the

<sup>1</sup> Telegram printed in British White Paper *Ethiopia* No. 1 [Cmd. 5044] of 1935, p. 13.

French and British Governments 'a moral mandate'<sup>1</sup> to go on doing what (as Monsieur van Zeeland himself observed) they had been doing already on their own account. The meaning of this new phrase in the diplomatic vocabulary was obscure. In calling the alleged mandate 'moral', were the phrase-makers tacitly avowing that it was deficient in mere legal validity? This was perhaps the truth, since the Co-ordination Committee, by which this moral act was declared to have been performed, was merely an *ad hoc* association of the sanction-taking states for the purpose of making uniform recommendations to the respective Governments in regard to the application of the sanctions which each Government, severally, was pledged, under the Covenant, to impose. The Co-ordination Committee had no legal warrant for assuming the functions of the Assembly, and *a fortiori* none for assuming those of the Council, whose functions—previously delegated to a Committee of Five—were now to be transferred to a Conspiracy of Two.

These transactions of the 2nd November at Geneva were referred to by Sir Samuel Hoare on the 4th in Chelsea, where, in the course of the election campaign, the Foreign Secretary was then once again addressing his constituents and belabouring his critics:

Although our policy is simple and straightforward to the utmost degree, it is travestied by these defamers into a policy of dishonesty and intrigue. 'The Government are fighting this election on a policy of peace and loyalty to the League,' say these critics, 'yet they are letting down the League now and they intend to let it down more in the future, and they are going to build up great armaments for war instead of peace.' . . . To show how simple things can be travestied and misrepresented, I will give you in a few sentences an account of my visit to Geneva, and you will then see how malicious and groundless are these spiteful suggestions. . . . Between forty and fifty states agreed upon a common line of action and showed thereby that they were ready to make considerable sacrifices in the cause of collective peace. Secondly, they showed without a dissenting voice that they had none of the unnatural suspicions that lurk in the minds of people like Mr. Lloyd George, Lord Snowden, and the Labour leaders, and that they fully approved of the efforts that the French and British Governments are making to find an honourable settlement of the controversy. . . . This is a complete, sufficient, and final answer to the electioneering partisans who declare that we are undermining the League to-day and are determined to destroy it to-morrow.

<sup>1</sup> In retrospect, this was explicitly disclaimed by Monsieur Laval in his speech of the 28th December, 1935, in the French Chamber, when he declared that the Laval-Hoare Plan had been drafted on the authority, 'not of a mandate—for we never received any mandate—but of the encouragement given to us, at Monsieur van Zeeland's suggestion, by the conference of 54 states'.



Thereafter, on the 21st November, 1935, after the General Election held in the United Kingdom on the 14th had duly resulted in the return of Mr. Baldwin and his colleagues to office, Mr. Peterson, the head of the Abyssinian Department of the Foreign Office in Whitehall, returned to Paris to resume his discussions with his French counterpart, Monsieur de St. Quentin. With their map of the Ethiopian wilderness spread out before them, the two experts now prepared the way of their ministerial lords and masters—filling the Danakil valleys, bringing low the Tigrean mountains and hills, adroitly making the rough ways of Somaliland smooth for camels, but perhaps not quite succeeding in making the crooked straight for Secretaries of State and Presidents of Council—until, on the 3rd December, it was possible to announce that these faithful forerunners had done their work so well that the ground was now ready for the principals to carry out the 'moral mandate' which had been tendered to Monsieur Laval and to Sir Samuel Hoare by Monsieur van Zeeland. It was simultaneously announced that Sir Samuel Hoare was to meet Monsieur Laval in Paris on the 7th; and in the meantime, on the 4th and on the 7th itself, Monsieur Laval had time for two more interviews with the Italian Ambassador before the British Secretary of State's momentous appointment with the French Prime Minister was duly kept.

On the 4th December a substantially correct outline of the now almost adult peace plan was telegraphed by a journalist from London to New York.<sup>1</sup>

On the 5th December, in a parting speech in the House of Commons at Westminster, Sir Samuel Hoare took credit for having

consistently and steadily followed the double line that has time after time been approved by the League and by this House. On the one hand we have taken our full part in the collective action under the Covenant, and on the other hand we have continued our efforts for a peaceful settlement.

Referring once again to the proceedings at the meeting of the Co-ordination Committee on the 2nd November, the Foreign Secretary claimed that the other delegates

gave a particular blessing to the efforts that France and we were making to find the basis of a peaceful settlement. Not a suggestion was made that France and we were going behind the back of the League. Indeed it was obvious to any one who was present at the meeting that the other states were most anxious that we should continue to take on their behalf this initiative for peace.

<sup>1</sup> See the despatch of the 4th December from 'Augur' in *The New York Times*, 5th December, 1935.

The orator ventured to add:

I state these facts once again lest any one should be so foolish as to harbour suspicions that the French and ourselves were attempting to side-track the League and to impose upon the World a settlement that could not be accepted by the three parties to the dispute.

On the 6th December an account of the St. Quentin-Peterson Peace Plan—which, two days later, was to be turned into the Laval-Hoare Peace Plan—was published in *The Manchester Guardian*; and it was there stated that, in the suggestions which the two experts were now to lay before their principals, there was one point on which their views did not coincide. While they were agreed, among other things, upon recommending the assignment, for exploitation by Italy, of a considerable slice of Ethiopian territory in the south and were also agreed that this zone should extend as far northward as the 8th degree of latitude north of the Equator, Mr. Peterson wished to set the western boundary of the zone at the 40th degree of longitude east of Greenwich, whereas Monsieur de St. Quentin wished to set it at the 38th degree. At Rome, on the 6th December, MM. Peterson and St. Quentin's work in Paris was referred to by Signor Mussolini in a speech, delivered in the Chamber of Deputies, in which he also dealt with sanctions and with Sir Samuel Hoare's speech in the House of Commons at Westminster on the previous day.

With regard to this, Signor Mussolini made play with Sir Samuel Hoare's assertion that the British Government were 'most anxious to see a strong Italy governed by a strong Government in whatever form the Italian people' might 'desire'.

There cannot [Signor Mussolini retorted] be an Italy who is strong in Europe, as Sir Samuel Hoare desires and as we want for our part, without a solution of the problem of the entire security of Italy's colonies in East Africa. Italy cannot be strong if she cannot find scope, in backward territories, for those capacities of hers for expansion, population and civilization which Hoare himself has clearly recognized in an earlier speech.<sup>1</sup>

With regard to sanctions, Signor Mussolini said:

It will suffice to declare and repeat, once for all, that the 365th day of the siege will find us still in possession of the same will, the same courage, the same determination as the first day of all. There is no siege that can bend us, and no coalition, however numerous, that can realize the illusory hope of making us abandon our objectives. . . . The subject on the agenda for the 12th December—I mean the embargo on oil—is calculated to prejudice the development of the situation gravely.

<sup>1</sup> Signor Mussolini was referring to Sir Samuel Hoare's speech in the House of Commons on the 11th July, 1935.

With regard to Monsieur de St. Quentin and Mr. Peterson's lucubrations, Signor Mussolini said:

During these last hours there are symptoms of a slight improvement in the atmosphere and perhaps of some mitigation of certain contemplated steps; but it is my duty to put you on your guard against any premature and excessive optimism. Contacts between two experts do not signify negotiations, and not even necessarily the possibility of them; and, even if negotiations do begin, there is no guarantee that they will arrive at results which will be either prompt or happy.

With regard to the speed at which things were to move, Signor Mussolini's caution turned out to be excessive; for, within two days of the delivery of this warning in Rome, the Laval-Hoare Peace Plan had been agreed upon in Paris.

These were the antecedents of Sir Samuel Hoare's journey to Paris from London on the 7th December, 1935. In order to make the sequel intelligible, account must be taken of both the state of his information and the state of his health at this point. By this time, Sir Samuel Hoare was convinced that Abyssinia was doomed to utter military defeat unless the disaster could be averted by a peace offer which would be so attractive to Signor Mussolini as to incline him to close with it rather than take the risk—such as it might be—of fighting to a finish in order to secure a totalitarian triumph. Sir Samuel Hoare's opinion was based on three grounds: first, the excellence of the Italian staff-work and organization behind the front; second, the professional reputation of Marshal Badoglio;<sup>1</sup> and, third, the failure of Abyssinia to obtain adequate supplies of munitions from abroad, even after the removal of the embargo on the part of all but two of the sanction-taking states members of the League.<sup>2</sup> In regard to the state of Sir Samuel Hoare's health, it must be mentioned that his appointment with Monsieur Laval for the 7th December had been an afterthought;

<sup>1</sup> Marshal Badoglio's brains were at work, from the beginning, on the Italian plan of campaign, though the Marshal did not take over the command in East Africa from General de Bono till the 28th November (see p. 386, below); and Sir Samuel Hoare knew that, in the opinion of the French General Staff, Badoglio was the best soldier alive in Europe.

<sup>2</sup> For the circumstances of the removal of the previous embargo on the export of arms to Abyssinia, see pp. 223-4, above. Thereafter, the United Kingdom Government appear to have given private British armament firms every encouragement to do business with the Ethiopian Government. The armament manufacturers held back, however, because they were sceptical about the likelihood of their obtaining payment; and, in the event, the amount of the war materials that found their way into Abyssinia via Berbera was negligible (see also p. 380, footnote 2, below). These facts throw a painful light upon the Abyssinian Government's repeated requests for a League loan, and upon the rejection of these requests by the applicant's fellow states members (see pp. 329, 344, 505 *seqq.*, below).

that the destination of his journey was not Paris at all, but a health resort in Switzerland, where he had arranged to take a holiday; and that he had not originally intended even to break his journey in Paris, and still less to transact any business there *en route*.

This intended holiday was long overdue; for the rapid accentuation of the Italo-Abyssinian crisis during the summer had cheated the then newly appointed Foreign Secretary of the summer holiday which he had expected, and needed, after his acceptance of the Foreign Secretaryship on the 7th June. The truth was that Sir Samuel Hoare—after four strenuous months of piloting the Government of India Bill through its long and stormy passage—had already become a sick man by the time when Mr. Baldwin proposed, and he himself agreed, that he should exchange the burden of the India Office for one that was even heavier. In falling in with this proposal Sir Samuel Hoare proved to have undertaken something beyond the limit of what his state of health would allow him to perform; and no doubt this was the original and cardinal error of judgment, on his part and on Mr. Baldwin's, to which the fiasco of the 7th–8th December, 1935, was ultimately due. This error was repeated on a minor scale when, again at Mr. Baldwin's request, Sir Samuel Hoare consented to walk into the Parisian spider's parlour for an hour or two on his way to the Alps;<sup>1</sup> but though this final addition to his labours was the last straw which broke Sir Samuel's back, it was merely the immediate occasion of his break-down, and not the ultimate cause.

Having agreed once in London to interrupt his time-table in order to please Mr. Baldwin, Sir Samuel Hoare was induced after his arrival in Paris to prolong the break in order to please Monsieur Laval. 'Sir Samuel Hoare had his first meeting with Monsieur Laval at 5.30 p.m.' on the 7th December, 'almost immediately after his arrival. With him were Sir Robert Vansittart, Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Sir George Clerk, the British Ambassador, and Mr. Peterson. Monsieur Laval was assisted by Monsieur Alexis Léger, Secrétaire-Général of the Quai d'Orsay, Monsieur Rochat, his chef-de-cabinet, and Monsieur de St. Quentin. Both Monsieur Laval and Sir Samuel had previously received despatches from the respective Ambassadors in Rome, and Monsieur Laval had seen Signor Cerruti, the Italian Ambassador, earlier in the day. Furthermore, a report of Signor Mussolini's speech in the Italian Chamber had arrived before the meeting began. The discussions lasted for close on two

<sup>1</sup> 'I was pressed on all sides to go, and I was pressed in such a way as to make refusal impossible.'—Sir Samuel Hoare in the House of Commons at Westminster on the 19th December, 1935.

and a half hours. They were followed by an official statement recording a complete agreement between the two countries to pursue a policy of "close collaboration". Having . . . reached agreement on this point, both statesmen decided to waste no time in putting the theory of collaboration into practice. Sir Samuel, putting the importance of the occasion before considerations of personal health, therefore decided to put off his departure for twenty-four hours—an act of abnegation which . . . earned him the warmest praise from the French press. The two statesmen, again accompanied by their advisers, resumed their discussion at 10.15' on the morning of the 8th, 'and, with a brief interval for luncheon, which they had together at the Quai d'Orsay, worked until about 6.30 that evening. . . . The conversations, both in scope and in depth, were unusually thorough.'<sup>1</sup> The all-day meeting on the 8th was a consequence of the outcome of the encounter on the 7th. On the 7th Monsieur Laval had at once turned his heavy artillery upon his English visitor and had bombarded him into an unconditional surrender. On the 8th Sir Samuel Hoare was already doing hard labour under duress for the French host who—in defiance of the laws of hospitality—had made his English visitor the captive of his bow and spear.

Monsieur Laval's opening shot on the 7th seems to have been an abrupt announcement that, at the interview which he had had earlier in the day—before Sir Samuel Hoare's arrival in Paris—with the Italian Ambassador,<sup>2</sup> Signor Cerruti had intimated to him that, if on the 12th December the Committee of Eighteen were to recommend the imposition of the oil sanction, Signor Mussolini would retort by launching an attack on the British Fleet in the Mediterranean. His second shot seems to have been a warning that as long a time as a fortnight might elapse, after the outbreak of hostilities, before the French Fleet would be ready to implement Monsieur Laval's pledge of the 18th October<sup>3</sup> that, if the contingency now in question were to arise, France would come to Great Britain's assistance with her armed forces; and he is reported also to have reminded<sup>4</sup> Sir

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 9th December, 1935.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 291, above.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 267, footnote 2, above, for the British Government's belief that the order of magnitude of the time-lag would be very much greater than that—in fact, not a fortnight but an aeon.

<sup>4</sup> 'Reminded' is presumably the right word, rather than 'informed'; for whatever Monsieur Laval may have said to Sir Samuel Hoare in Paris on the 7th December about the technical aspect of Franco-British naval co-operation in the event of an Italian attack, it can hardly have been news to the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, who must have been informed of the results of the conversations between French and British naval experts which had already been held in London and which had been opened as early as the

Samuel Hoare that the French naval ports and dockyards in the Mediterranean had not the capacity for harbouring the largest of the British Navy's capital ships. These two shots seem to have gone home with such effect as to spare Monsieur Laval the necessity of unmasking two other batteries which he still had in reserve. Apparently he did not have to tell Sir Samuel Hoare in so many words that, if the British delegate at Geneva on the 12th did propose the imposition of the oil sanction, the French delegate would vote against the resolution; and, *a fortiori*, he did not have to tell him that, if Great Britain then proceeded to impose the oil sanction on her own account (as she was undoubtedly entitled to do<sup>1</sup> under Article 16 of the Covenant) without French assent or participation, France would withhold her armed support from Great Britain (as she would perhaps have been entitled in these circumstances to withhold it, according to the terms of Monsieur Laval's pledge on the 18th October, though not according to the terms of the Covenant) if such British action were answered, on Italy's part, by an armed attack on the British Fleet.<sup>2</sup> Without these further salvos, the Frenchman's first two shots had been enough to make the British statesman strike his flag.<sup>3</sup>

30th October (see p. 266, above). Points such as those raised by Monsieur Laval on the 7th December must have been exactly the sort of thing that the experts had discussed, so that it is not easy to see how Monsieur Laval can have had any unpleasant surprises up his sleeve, to spring upon Sir Samuel Hoare, in this matter of naval technique.

<sup>1</sup> The individual right of every state member of the League of Nations to decide for its own part, after the 12th December, to apply the oil sanction, was implicit in the fact that the oil sanction was merely one, already belated, instalment of the pledge, contained in Article 16 of the Covenant, immediately to break off all economic relations with a Covenant-breaking state upon finding that a breach of the Covenant had been committed. The British—and likewise the French—Government had found Italy guilty of a breach of the Covenant when they gave their vote in that sense at the meeting of the League Council on the 7th October, 1935 (see p. 206, above).

<sup>2</sup> So far from this, Monsieur Laval, according to his own account, given in the Chamber in Paris on the 27th December, 1935, actually confirmed to Sir Samuel Hoare, at the meeting of the 7th–8th December, the French pledge of the 18th October.

<sup>3</sup> The considerations which moved Sir Samuel Hoare to capitulate on this occasion were afterwards put on record by the *ci-devant* Foreign Secretary in the following terms in his apology of the 19th December, 1935, in the House of Commons at Westminster:

It was in an atmosphere of threatened war that the conversations began, and it was in an atmosphere in which the majority of the member states—indeed I would say the totality of the member states—appeared to be opposed to military action. It was a moment of great urgency. Within five days the question of the oil embargo was to come up at Geneva, and I did not feel myself justified in proposing any postponement of the embargo, unless it could be shown to the League that negotiations had actually started. It

The rapidity and ease with which this diplomatic victory of the 7th December had been won must have been welcomed by Monsieur Laval with a discreet sigh of relief; for the two missiles which he had discharged—the Italian threat to attack the British Fleet and the French warning of a possible delay on the French side in coming to Great Britain's assistance—were both of them such as could, if necessary, be exhibited in public without much embarrassment to France, whereas it would have been extremely embarrassing for her if Monsieur Laval had placed Sir Samuel Hoare in a position to tell the World that his French colleague had sought to put diplomatic pressure upon him by a threat that France would desert Great Britain if the latter Power persisted in carrying out obligations under the Covenant to which both Powers were equally pledged. Such an exposure would have shown France up in such an invidious light that it is difficult to understand why Sir Samuel Hoare did not insist on drawing the rest of Monsieur Laval's fire and thereby unmasking French batteries which were mounted with weapons abhorrent to the usages of polite diplomatic warfare. It lay in Sir Samuel Hoare's power to confront Monsieur Laval with two successive disagreeable choices: first, the choice between participating in the imposition of the oil sanction or else openly voting against it at Geneva on the 12th December; and, second, the choice between fulfilling his covenanted obligation to come to the armed assistance of Great Britain if Italy attacked her for implementing Article 16 of the Covenant, or else openly notifying Signor Mussolini in advance that, if he now attacked the British Fleet, he need no longer have any fear of bringing France into the lists on Great Britain's side. Monsieur Laval's previous conduct suggests that, if he had been confronted with these choices, he would have flinched from openly repudiating the Covenant and openly breaking with Great Britain, and would have chosen, as the less unpleasant alternative of the two, to go on collaborating with Great Britain—in continuation of the course which, however reluctantly, he had actually been taking so far—in applying the Covenant against Italy, even if this meant that France must take her part in giving a new, and sharper, twist to the sanctions screw. As it turned out, however, Sir Samuel Hoare inexplicably forbore to pursue the tactics

was a moment when, while most member states had taken a part in the economic sanctions, no member state except ourselves had taken any military precautions. Lastly, it was a moment when it seemed to me that Anglo-French co-operation was essential if there was to be no breach at Geneva and if the sanctions when functioning were not to be destroyed. For two days Monsieur Laval and I discussed the basis of a possible negotiation.

which would thus, in all probability, have compelled his French diplomatic adversary to cease fire and to come to heel. At the second shot he capitulated—and this so abjectly that, so far from forcing Monsieur Laval to show his disreputable hand, Sir Samuel Hoare prolonged his own stay in Paris for another twenty-four hours in order to collaborate with his conqueror in working out a plan which—if successfully put into operation—would enable Monsieur Laval to gather in the harvest of his victory over Sir Samuel Hoare without ever being compelled to reveal in public the odious rôle which, in the name of France, he was playing behind the scenes.

At their second meeting—the all-day meeting on the 8th December—the French and British statesmen took the St. Quentin-Peterson Plan and turned it into the Laval-Hoare Plan, not by striking a compromise between the respective proposals of the French and the British expert, but by revising it on terms which, while introducing one new feature that was to Abyssinia's advantage, were nevertheless, on the balance, still more indulgent to Italian appetites than the utmost length to which Monsieur de St. Quentin himself had ventured to go. The plan, as the experts had drafted it, was already a proposal for awarding the Covenant-breaker a bonus on account of his breach of his covenanted word. As the statesmen now improved upon their subordinates' work, the bonus was enlarged to a size at which Monsieur Laval believed—and in this matter he had every opportunity of being well informed—that the bribe would be acceptable to Signor Mussolini.

The plan, as it thus emerged from the hands of MM. Laval and Hoare at the end of their meeting on the 8th December, consisted of two parts: first, a proposal for cutting three slices off the extremities of the Ethiopian Empire and giving these to Italy outright; and, second, a proposal for cutting off an additional slice—much larger than all the others put together—and giving this, too, to Italy in fact though not in form.<sup>1</sup> Both proposals were given euphemistic cross-headings. The first was diplomatically entitled 'Exchange of Territories', the second 'Zone of Economic Expansion and Settlement'.

The text of the first proposal in the plan ran as follows:

(a) *Tigre*.—Cession to Italy of eastern Tigre approximately limited on the south by the River Gheva and on the west by a line running from north to south passing between Axum (on the Ethiopian side) and Adowa (on the Italian side).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The French had originally proposed that, after certain Abyssinian territories had been given to Italy outright in full sovereignty, the whole of the rest of Abyssinia should also be given her to administer under a mandate.

<sup>2</sup> The French had originally proposed that the whole of Tigre should be



(b) *Rectification of Frontiers between the Danakil Country and Eritrea* leaving to the south of the boundary line Aussa and the extent of Eritrean territory necessary to give Ethiopia an outlet to the sea to be defined below.

(c) *Rectification of Frontiers between the Ogaden and Italian Somaliland*—Starting from the trijunction point between the frontiers of Ethiopia, Kenya and Italian Somaliland the new Italo-Ethiopian frontier would follow a general north-easterly direction cutting the Oueb Shebeli at Iddidolo, leaving Gorahei to the east, Warandab to the west and meeting the frontier of British Somaliland where it intersects the 45th meridian.

The rights of the tribes of British Somaliland to the use of grazing areas and wells situated in the territories granted to Italy by this delimitation should be guaranteed.

(d) Ethiopia will receive an outlet to the sea with full sovereign rights. It seems that this outlet should be formed preferably by the cession, to which Italy would agree, of the port of Assab and of a strip of territory giving access to this port along the frontier of French Somaliland.

The United Kingdom and French Governments will endeavour to obtain from the Ethiopian Government guarantees for the fulfilment of the obligations which devolve upon them regarding slavery and arms traffic in the territories acquired by them.<sup>1</sup>

It may be observed that this was a proposal for allowing Italy to annex all the Ethiopian territory which she had actually occupied up to date<sup>2</sup> by force of arms in her Covenant-breaking war of aggression, with the sole exception of the holy city of Axum. It may also be observed that, while two of the three slices of Ethiopian territory in which Italy's unlawful occupation was thus to be legitimized retrospectively were non-Amharan territories, the Tigrean slice was an integral and ancient part of the Amharan people's homeland, so that Italy had no claim to it even on the formula, which had been invented by the Italians themselves, that a distinction ought to be drawn between the Amharan core of the Ethiopian Empire and its non-Amharan fringes, and that Italy ought to be encouraged to execute her 'historic mission', and fulfil her 'manifest destiny', by 'liberating' the fringes while leaving the Amharan core to stew in its own *jus barbaricum*. In the third place it may be observed that, taken together, the three slices of Ethiopian territory which Italy was thus to acquire outright, in virtue of a predatory act of conquest, were so much more extensive and more populous than the strip of Eritrea which Italy was to be asked to cede to Abyssinia that the official

ceded to Italy. The exclusion of Axum from the territory which was to be ceded was a British amendment—the purpose of which was to save for Abyssinia the holy city of the Monophysite Church in Ethiopia.—A. J. T.

<sup>1</sup> Text as in British White Paper *Cmd.* 5044 of 1935, pp. 14–15.

<sup>2</sup> See section (xii) below.

description of the proposed transaction as an 'exchange of territory' was farcical. Finally, if the authors of the plan sought to argue that the value of this strip for Abyssinia could not be measured in terms of square kilometres or cubic souls, since the acquisition of it would give her the inestimable boon of a direct access to the sea across territory of her own,<sup>1</sup> it could be pointed out in reply that Abyssinia was being asked to pay a price for the proposed Asab corridor which she might well regard as excessive—however high the Anglo-French

<sup>1</sup> Apart from the consideration of the price—in the shape of an enlargement of the 'zone of economic expansion and settlement reserved to Italy' in the South—which Abyssinia was to be required to pay for the proposed Asab corridor, the question was raised whether the intrinsic value of the corridor itself might not turn out to be reduced almost to zero by a condition governing the proposal, which was not mentioned in so many words but which was, perhaps, nevertheless implicit. The decree of the 9th March, 1894, by which the Emperor Menelik had granted the concession for the construction of the Djibouti-Addis Ababa Railway, had provided that no other company should be authorized to construct rival lines, whether from the Red Sea and Indian Ocean into Abyssinia or from Abyssinia to the White Nile (see *L'Europe Nouvelle*, 12th January, 1929, pp. 54-5); and, on the face of it, it would seem that the terms of this decree would have inhibited Menelik's successor Haile Selassie from turning the proposed Asab corridor to account by building a railway through it to connect the new Ethiopian port with its hinterland. Indeed, according to a despatch of the 15th December, 1935, from the correspondent of *The Times* in Paris, it was believed in that city that, if the Emperor had accepted the proposed 'exchange' as a basis for peace negotiations, he was to have been told at a later stage—that is, as soon as he was judged to have committed himself too deeply to draw back—that he was legally debarred from using the Asab corridor as anything but 'a corridor for camels'. This was the title of a leading article on the subject which appeared in *The Times* on the 16th December in the same issue as the despatch of the 15th from Paris; and this brilliant stroke of the journalist's pen actually played a perceptible part in bringing the Laval-Hoare Plan to the ground. In British official circles, it was submitted that both the despatch and the article were written under a misapprehension. It was admitted that the terms of the decree of the 9th March, 1894, would have come into play if Abyssinia had acquired a corridor to the sea, not at Asab in the Italian colony of Eritrea, but at Zeila, in British Somaliland, in execution of the British proposal which had been made to, and rejected, by Signor Mussolini on the occasion of Mr. Eden's visit to Rome on the 24th-26th June, 1935 (see p. 160, above). It was asserted, however, that, in the Laval-Hoare conversations of the 7th-8th December, 1935, it was expressly stipulated on the British side, and agreed on the French side, that if, as a result of the Laval-Hoare Plan's proving acceptable, Abyssinia were to acquire a corridor to the sea not at Zeila but at Asab, then the Emperor should not be restricted to making use of it as a corridor for camels, but should be free to build a railway from Asab into the interior if he chose.

'Let me make it quite clear', said Sir Samuel Hoare in the House of Commons at Westminster on the 19th December, 1935, 'that the proposal was for an effective outlet, with a wide corridor in full sovereignty for Abyssinia, at Asab, and no stipulation was discussed concerning any restriction upon it as to the building of a railway. The Zeila alternative was only included as an alternative if both sides preferred it.'

valuation of the Asab corridor might be. For it was in consideration of this particular proposal—which had not figured in the St. Quentin-Peterson Plan, but had been brought up for the first time at the conversations on the 7th–8th December—that Sir Samuel Hoare accepted Monsieur Laval's proposal that the 'zone of economic expansion and settlement reserved to Italy' on Ethiopian soil should be still broader than the area that had been suggested by Monsieur de St. Quentin.

The second proposal in the plan was for 'the formation in Southern Ethiopia of a zone of economic expansion and settlement reserved to Italy'; and this proposal was set out in the following text:

The limits of this zone would be, on the east, the rectified frontier between Ethiopia and Italian Somaliland, on the north, the 8th parallel; on the west, the 35th meridian; on the south, the frontier between Ethiopia and Kenya.

Within this zone, which would form an integral part of Ethiopia, Italy would enjoy exclusive economic rights which might be administered by a privileged company or by any other like organization, to which would be recognized—subject to the acquired rights of natives and foreigners—the right of ownership of unoccupied territories, the monopoly of the exploitation of mines, forests, &c. This organization would be obliged to contribute to the economic equipment of the country, and to devote a portion of its revenues to expenditure of a social character for the benefit of the native population.

The control of the Ethiopian administration in the zone would be exercised, under the sovereignty of the Emperor, by the services of the scheme of assistance drawn up by the League of Nations [and already accepted by the Emperor as extending over the whole area of Abyssinian administration].<sup>1</sup> Italy would take a preponderating, but not an exclusive, share in these services, which would be under the direct control of one of the principal advisers attached to the Central Government. The principal adviser in question, who might be of Italian nationality, would be the assistant, for the affairs in question, of the Chief Adviser delegated by the League of Nations to assist the Emperor. The Chief Adviser would not be a subject of one of the Powers bordering on Ethiopia.

The services of the scheme of assistance, in the capital as well as in the reserved zone, would regard it as one of their essential duties to ensure the safety of Italian subjects and the free development of their enterprises.

The Government of the United Kingdom and the French Government will willingly endeavour to ensure that this organization, the details of which must be elaborated by the League of Nations, fully safeguards the interests of Italy in this region.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These words appear only in the text communicated to the Emperor of Abyssinia, and not in the corresponding text communicated to Signor Mussolini. Otherwise the two texts are identical.—A. J. T.

<sup>2</sup> *Cmd.* 5044 of 1935, pp. 15–16.

Any reader of this text who was acquainted with the history of modern Western 'imperialism' could perceive that 'economic expansion and settlement', on the terms here proposed, meant ultimate political dominion. A large part—perhaps actually the major portion—of the existing colonial empires of the European Powers and of their imitator Japan had been acquired under a similar pretence that the beast of prey was not devouring his prey when he was devouring it. The hypocritical formula was a sop to the conscience of idealists which the empire-builders had found, by experience, that it was worth their while to serve up, since the hypocrisy distinctly eased the process of acquisition, without seriously retarding it. In the case in point, Signor Mussolini might be the more readily disposed to acquire the southern half of the Ethiopian Empire by this roundabout and gradual method because on the one hand he had not yet succeeded in conquering the broad territories, thus offered to him, by force of arms, while, for his special purpose, they were particularly desirable because they largely consisted of fertile temperate highlands—in contrast to the sterile torrid deserts that composed two out of the three slices that the first proposal in the plan was offering to him outright.<sup>1</sup>

The temptingness of the second proposal was enhanced by the unexpected extent of the territory, possibly suitable for Italian settlement, that was offered to Signor Mussolini in the amended form in which the proposal emerged, on the 8th December, from the hands of Sir Samuel Hoare and Monsieur Laval. It has been mentioned above<sup>2</sup> that Mr. Peterson had tentatively set the western limit of this zone along longitude 40° east of Greenwich, while Monsieur de St. Quentin had tentatively advanced it to the line of longitude 38°. For the experts' two principals, the line of least resistance would have been to split the difference by compromising upon longitude 39°; and this is what ordinary diplomatists, in their everyday mood, would have been inclined to do. On the 8th December, however, Sir Samuel Hoare was inspired by Monsieur Laval to join him in making a special effort to secure peace in East Africa (and so perhaps become better

<sup>1</sup> Sir Samuel Hoare argued—in his speech of the 19th December in the House of Commons at Westminster—that 'in no sense was the area to be a transferred territory'. His advocacy of this thesis will perhaps not be found altogether convincing; but in describing the social conditions then prevailing in the territory he was on stronger ground:

This area is non-Amharic. It represents comparatively recent conquest by Abyssinia; it is sparsely populated, slave raiding has devastated it in some parts, while slave ownership is prevalent over the whole area, as indeed over the whole country.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 289, above.

prepared against war in Europe) by giving satisfaction to Signor Mussolini. As an offset to the Asab corridor,<sup>1</sup> the two statesmen agreed to extend the zone as far west as the line of longitude 35°, along which the Abyssinian plateau descended to the level of the Sudanese lowlands!

Having thus agreed upon terms which would be acceptable to Signor Mussolini in Monsieur Laval's belief, the British and French Foreign Ministers further agreed, at the same sitting, that—as far as this lay with them to decide—the plan should be communicated forthwith to the two belligerents; that they should both be urged to accept it; and that the project of imposing the oil sanction should be held in suspense pending the outcome of this fresh attempt at a settlement by 'conciliation'. It will be seen that this agreed course of action meant rewarding the aggressor, for accepting a bonus with which he was expected to be content, by offering him, in return, a release from the menace of the imminent application of a sanction which he was known to dread, whereas the victim of aggression was to be faced with a demand for sacrifices, which must *ex hypothesi* be as grievous to him as they were acceptable to his assailant, under threat that, if he demurred, he would be penalized by being denied any further help from his fellow members of the League who were pledged, under the Covenant, not merely to save him alive from the aggressor's jaws, but actually to preserve for him his territorial integrity!

The twin creators of this plan for handing over to Italy about half of the territory of Abyssinia had worked with such a will that they had ended their labours by 6.30 p.m. on the second day; and, when they saw everything that they had made, they asked the World, in a *communiqué* published that same evening, to believe that the result was very good.

Animated by the same spirit of conciliation, and inspired by close Franco-British friendship, we have in the course of our long conversations of to-day and yesterday sought the formulas which might serve as a basis for a friendly settlement of the Italo-Ethiopian dispute.

<sup>1</sup> Formally, the proposed cession of the Asab corridor to Abyssinia by Italy was presented, in the text of the plan, as the consideration which Abyssinia was to receive in exchange for the cession of Abyssinian territories to Italy in Tigre, the Danakil country and the Ogaden. Actually, the bargain struck between Sir Samuel Hoare and Monsieur Laval was that, in consideration of Monsieur Laval's accepting Sir Samuel Hoare's proposal for an Asab corridor for Abyssinia, Sir Samuel Hoare should consent to a westward displacement of the western boundary of the 'zone of economic expansion and settlement reserved to Italy' from Mr. Peterson's longitude 40° beyond Monsieur de St. Quentin's longitude 38° to Monsieur Laval's longitude 35°.

There could be no question at present of publishing these formulas. The British Government has not yet been informed of them; and, once its agreement has been received, it will be necessary to submit them to the consideration of the interested Governments and to the decision of the League of Nations.

We have worked together with the same anxiety to reach as rapidly as possible a pacific and honourable solution. We are both satisfied with the results which we have reached.

It remained for the two Foreign Ministers to do what lay in their power in order to put into operation the plan which they had thus worked out together and for which they had both already assumed a personal responsibility. For Monsieur Laval, who was his own Prime Minister, this was a simple matter of letting his right hand know what his left hand had been doing. Sir Samuel Hoare, on the other hand, was not in a position to commit the Government of the United Kingdom without having secured for the plan the approval of Mr. Baldwin and of his other colleagues in the Cabinet at Westminster. Accordingly Mr. Peterson left Paris for London that evening with the text of the Laval-Hoare Peace Plan, and an account of the proceedings out of which it had arisen, in his despatch box; and, pending a decision on the British Government's part, MM. Hoare and Laval asked the British newspaper correspondents in Paris and the Parisian press respectively to refrain from publishing any information or even conjectures about what the plan might be. Having thus despatched by hand, alive and ticking, a bomb addressed to Westminster and marked 'to be placed under the Treasury Bench', Sir Samuel Hoare rested at last from all his work which he had made, and caught—just twenty-four hours later than he had intended—the 10 p.m. train from Paris for the Engadine, where he fondly expected to enjoy a sabbath calm. But Monsieur Laval did not rest; and by the time when the despatches carried by Mr. Peterson had reached Mr. Baldwin's hands on the morning of the 9th, an ample and accurate account of the plan had been published in at least two French newspapers. Sir Samuel's plea for silence had indeed, in French ears, been a positive incitement to give the plan publicity; for, when once its contents were a matter of public knowledge, it would be difficult for the British Prime Minister to reject what his Foreign Secretary had accepted and had drafted and had recommended, without disavowing the man in the act of disapproving the measure. And on the 9th December Mr. Baldwin did find this just as difficult as had been calculated by sharp French wits.

Upon receiving his confidential copy of the plan at breakfast-time on the morning of the 9th, and learning, almost in the same breath,

that the contents had already been divulged to the World, Mr. Baldwin at once called a Cabinet meeting, which was duly held on the same day at 6 p.m. The proposed terms appear to have astonished and disturbed the Prime Minister's colleagues no less than the Prime Minister himself, and the Cabinet was reported to have been sharply divided between a minority, led by Mr. Neville Chamberlain, which was in favour of rejecting the plan at whatever private cost to its English author, on the ground that the plan was contrary to the public interest, and a majority, led by Mr. Baldwin, which held that the Cabinet's overriding duty was to line up in support of a sick and absent colleague. From the 9th to the 18th December, this 'respect to persons'<sup>1</sup> determined the British Government's policy, until Ministers were swept off their feet by a swiftly mounting tide of public indignation. The movement of public opinion in Great Britain has been dealt with elsewhere,<sup>2</sup> in this place it remains to record the proceedings in the Parliament at Westminster and the line which was taken by the Government.

As a result of the publication of the terms of the Laval-Hoare Plan in the French press on the 9th, the plan was discussed in the House of Commons at Westminster on the 10th—first at question-time and then in a debate for which an opportunity had been provided by the fortuitous operation of the traditional English parliamentary procedure.<sup>3</sup> In answer to questions, Mr. Baldwin stated that 'no suggested basis' had 'at present been submitted for the views of either Italy or Abyssinia', and that 'it would clearly be premature to make a statement on the subject at present'. He added that while he had not, himself, examined the press reports, he had been told by those who had studied both these and the authentic text that there were considerable differences in matters of substance. In his attempts to hold his questioners at bay Mr. Baldwin betrayed an embarrassment which was likewise shown in the subsequent debate by Mr. Eden, who followed Mr. Baldwin in declaring that there were 'important inaccuracies' in the press reports, while at the same time he sought to defend the authentic plan, by anticipation, on the plea that it was covered by the 'moral mandate' which had been offered to MM. Laval and Hoare by Monsieur van Zeeland.<sup>4</sup> By this time the loudness of the ticking of the bomb which had been deposited under their bench through the action of an absent colleague was getting on Ministers'

<sup>1</sup> James ii. 1-9; Colossians iii. 25.

<sup>2</sup> In section (ii) (e) above.

<sup>3</sup> The House of Commons happened to be engaged in the debate on the Address to the Throne.

<sup>4</sup> See pp. 286-7, above.

nerves, and a sensation was produced by the speech in which Mr. Baldwin replied, later in the day, to an announcement from a spokesman of the Opposition, Mr. Pethick Lawrence, that the Opposition intended to vote against the Address to the Throne 'as the only means open to the Opposition of entering their protest against the terrible crime that seemed likely at the present juncture'. In reply to this, Mr. Baldwin said:

I think we can take no exception to the last words which fell from the honourable member. I think it is the only course open to those of the Opposition who desire to express dissent from the conduct of the Government. I shall speak for but a short time. I have seldom spoken with greater regret, for my lips are not yet unsealed. Were these troubles over I would make a case—and I guarantee that not a man would go into the lobby against us.

Before sitting down, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom made a sharp, but perhaps not unjustified, reflection upon the outlook and temper of the electorate.

An observation which I believe to be very true was made by Mr. Stephen. He said that a large number of voters at the General Election would support sanctions but did not wish for war. (Cheers.) I do not believe there is any one in this country who wants it, but the people of this country are following with the keenest interest what is now taking place, and I do say this frankly—and I assure the House that there is no cynicism in it—we are learning and have learned a great deal in the last three months as to what is possible at present in the world and what is not. (Cheers.)

In the course of the same speech Mr. Baldwin gently took Mr. Pethick Lawrence—'a Fellow of my old college'—to task for his 'suspicious nature', and he declared that he could assure the honourable member that, as far as he (Mr. Baldwin) knew, no communications of any kind had gone either to Addis Ababa or to Rome. At 9.47 p.m., when Mr. Baldwin was giving this assurance, he was undoubtedly speaking the truth; yet, before Mr. Baldwin went to bed that night, telegrams, containing messages for transmission respectively to Signor Mussolini and to the Emperor Haile Selassie, had been despatched from the Foreign Office in Whitehall, in the name of the absent Secretary of State, to Sir Eric Drummond and to Sir Sidney Barton, while corresponding telegrams to the representatives of France at Rome and at Addis Ababa had been despatched from the Quai d'Orsay.

This action had been preceded by negotiations in Paris which, after Sir Samuel Hoare's departure for Switzerland, had been conducted on the British side by the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for



Foreign Affairs, Sir Robert Vansittart. These negotiations appear to have been concerned, not with the substance of the plan, but with the procedure for launching it. Monsieur Laval is reported to have been in favour of submitting the plan to Signor Mussolini alone in the first instance, while the British negotiators held that it ought to be communicated simultaneously to the Emperor of Abyssinia, at any rate, if not to the League of Nations. In the event, the communications were addressed to Rome and to Addis Ababa simultaneously; and the French and British Ambassadors duly handed the text of the plan to Signor Mussolini at 5 p.m. and 5.30 p.m., respectively, on the 11th; but the corresponding *démarche* by the French and British Ministers at Addis Ababa was not made until the following day; and, at least on the British Government's part,<sup>1</sup> the respective approaches to the two parties were not made in identical terms. While Sir Eric Drummond was merely instructed to make, jointly with his French colleague, an 'urgent communication' to Signor Mussolini, Sir Sidney Barton was additionally instructed to make the corresponding urgent communication to the Emperor 'in whatever manner you consider most suitable and expeditious'.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, in the terms of the communication regarding the proposal for an 'exchange of territories', it was set forth in both the British Government's telegrams, in identical words, that 'the Governments of Great Britain and France agree to recommend to His Majesty the Emperor of Ethiopia the acceptance of the following exchanges of territory between Ethiopia and Italy'. The British Government did not think it worth while to tell the Emperor that they were making the same recommendation to the head of the Italian state; and, through this unsymmetrical identity of phrase, they were tacitly confessing that the so-called 'exchange' was in reality a one-sided transaction (in which Abyssinia was being called upon to do the giving, and Italy invited to do the taking), no less than the undisguisably one-sided proposal for a 'zone of economic expansion and settlement'. The implication contained in these identities and differences of phrase was underlined—with an emphasis that cleared up any possible ambiguity—in a second telegram<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The texts of the notes despatched on this occasion by the French Government do not appear to have been made public.

<sup>2</sup> *Omd.* 5044 of 1935, pp. 13 and 16.

<sup>3</sup> In the House of Commons at Westminster on the 19th December, 1935, Sir Samuel Hoare gave the following interpretation of what the intention of this telegram was:

The telegram in no way meant that we wished to impose terms upon him, but we did feel, looking to the dangers of the future, that it was for the Emperor to think with responsibility and seriousness whether in his own interests it was better or not that he should favourably consider negotiations.

which was despatched to Sir Sidney Barton, on the heels of the first, that same evening:

*Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to Sir S. Barton (Addis Ababa).*  
(Telegram). London, 10th December, 1935.

My immediately preceding telegram.

You should use your utmost influence to induce Emperor to give careful and favourable consideration to these proposals and on no account lightly to reject them. On the contrary, I feel sure that he will give further proof of his statesmanship by realizing the advantage of the opportunity of negotiation which they afford, and will avail himself thereof.<sup>1</sup>

This was the situation—as between France, Great Britain, Italy, and Abyssinia—when the Committee of Eighteen reassembled at last on the 12th December under conditions which relieved Monsieur Laval of the need to find a pretext for a further postponement. In the meanwhile, on the 9th December, the President of the League Council had summoned the Council to meet in private session on the 17th.<sup>2</sup> This unexpected convocation of the Council was officially stated to have been decided upon at the request of the chairman of the Council's committee on the settlement of the 'Irāqī Assyrians',<sup>3</sup> but, though some business on this subject was actually transacted when the Council did meet, it was widely believed that the real purpose was to bring the Council into session in order that it might be asked to give the Laval-Hoare Plan its blessing in the event of Signor Mussolini's acceptance of the plan having been secured in the interval.

The proceedings of the Committee of Eighteen on the 12th December were arranged on the pattern of those on the 2nd November—with Monsieur Laval playing his old part, Mr. Eden playing Sir Samuel Hoare's, and the Polish delegate, Monsieur Komarnicki, replacing the Belgian delegate Monsieur van Zeeland. There was, however, a difference in the execution of the comedy which was as significant as it was conspicuous. Mr. Eden understudied his absent colleague in a pointedly left-handed fashion.

After reviewing in his own terms the history of the Laval-Hoare Plan down to the Franco-British *démarches* at Rome and Addis Ababa, Monsieur Laval concluded:

The Italian and Ethiopian Governments were informed yesterday of our suggestions. We propose to communicate them shortly to the Council

<sup>1</sup> *Cmd.* 5044 of 1935, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> The Council eventually met on the 18th (see p. 309, below).

<sup>3</sup> For the history of the 'Irāqī Assyrians', see the *Survey for 1934*, Part II, section (ii) (b) (3).

of the League.<sup>1</sup> Our part will then have been played, and it will be for the League of Nations to settle what is to be done. We are confident at least that the League will appreciate the loyalty of the efforts, the only object of which (let me repeat) has been to expedite, within the framework of the League, the settlement of a conflict the continuance of which weighs so heavily on the World.

Mr. Eden then told the same tale in words which, while not formally conflicting with Monsieur Laval's, were calculated—and no doubt deliberately calculated—to imprint a very different impression upon the minds of his audience.

Last November, as my colleagues will recall, when the Co-ordination Committee agreed upon certain sanctions which are now in force, at the same time it specifically approved all attempts to find a basis of discussion between the two parties to this dispute, and it particularly welcomed the suggestion that His Majesty's Government and the French Government should seek to find such a basis. We had no mandate from the Co-ordination Committee, and that Committee had no power to give us such a mandate, but my colleagues will remember that we had their unanimous goodwill in our task. What, therefore, the representatives of the United Kingdom and French Governments have been seeking to do in Paris was to work out proposals that might be submitted to both sides, and upon which both sides might be willing to come together to open discussions here at Geneva. These conversations in Paris were begun with the approval of members of the League, and neither the French Government nor ourselves have, at any time, had any other intention than to bring the outcome of our work to the League for the League's information and judgment.

The proposals now put forward are neither definitive nor sacrosanct. They are suggestions which, it is hoped, may make possible the beginning of negotiations. If the League does not agree with these suggestions, we shall make no complaint; indeed, we should cordially welcome any suggestions for their improvement. The policy of His Majesty's Government remains to-day what it has been since the dispute began. Any final settlement must be acceptable to the League, as well as to the two parties in conflict.

In the circumstances, it seems to me that the best procedure to follow at the present time is to call together the Council at the earliest practicable moment, in order that a full statement of the proposals should be made to it. It will be for that body to determine, as and when it sees fit, what course it would wish to pursue in the light of the situation thus created; and, in advance, I emphasize that, so far as His Majesty's Government are concerned, we will not only readily accept the judg-

<sup>1</sup> 'It had been Monsieur Laval's plan to have the Paris proposals submitted to the Committee of Five, which formulated the League plan which Italy rejected. But on his arrival at Geneva he encountered such strong opposition to this course, led by Turkey and Poland (who were members of the Committee), supported by Señor de Madariaga (who was its chairman), that he abandoned it.' (*The Manchester Guardian*, 13th December, 1935.)

ment of our colleagues, but we will continue to use our best efforts to further the two objectives which have been constantly before us in this dispute—the restoration of peace and the maintenance of the authority of the League.

Finally Monsieur Komarnicki proposed, with the conventional diplomatic circumlocution, that, pending the outcome of the Laval-Hoare Plan, all further consideration of the oil sanction on the committee's part should be once again deferred.

While the statements of Monsieur Laval and Mr. Eden did not, at that stage of the committee's work, affect the execution of the resolutions already taken, they imposed upon the members an obligation to observe great discretion and not to do anything calculated to impinge upon the competence of any organ whose duty it was to take a decision on the substance of the question, and, in particular, the Council of the League. The activities of the committee, though from a strictly legal point of view they were independent of the action carried on by the regular organs of the League, were necessarily affected by political events, and particularly by events which were of such a character as to facilitate the attainment of the end which all must have in view—namely, the restoration of peace. Being of the opinion, in accordance with the line of conduct from which the Polish Government had never diverged, that it was the right and the duty of the competent organs of the League to determine the significance of recent events, and to examine the situation as a whole, Monsieur Komarnicki thought the committee should refrain from any measure which might have a political character, so long as the Council of the League had not been able to take a decision on the merits of the new proposals put forward by France and the United Kingdom. The adoption of any new measure by the Committee of Eighteen might prejudice the action which the Council, in virtue of its powers, would shortly have to take.

The chairman of the Committee of Eighteen had no choice but to follow the Polish delegate's cue. On the 13th, after the examination and adoption of the report of the Committee of Experts,<sup>1</sup> Senhor de Vasconcellos proposed an adjournment in the following terms:

The committee was not acquainted with the bases on which those negotiations were being pursued; but it knew that they would shortly be submitted to the Council. In those circumstances, the committee could hardly take any fresh decisions before knowing those proposals, the replies of the parties and the Council's discussions, if it were not to run the risk of causing prejudice to the progress of negotiations or decisions which were represented as likely to lead to a rapid cessation of hostilities. He would summon the committee for the examination of the other questions on the agenda as soon as he possessed the necessary information, and in any case at an early date.

After protests—in which indignation was choked by impotence—

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 233-5, above.

from the Swedish and Mexican delegates, this proposal to adjourn was tacitly accepted.

On the same date, the 13th December, the following letter was addressed to the Secretary-General of the League over the two signatures of Monsieur Laval and Mr. Eden:

Since the failure of the efforts undertaken by the League of Nations to find a peaceful solution of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict, the desire has been expressed on several occasions, both in the Council and the Assembly, to see the conflict brought to an end by an agreed settlement as soon as possible.

The Governments of the United Kingdom and France have worked out together, bearing in mind the deliberations of the Committee of Five, the bases of a settlement of this nature, and instructed their representatives at Rome and Addis Ababa on the 10th December to lay before the Italian and Ethiopian Governments certain suggestions in this sense.

We have the honour to transmit to you herewith the text of this document, which we should be glad if you would communicate to the members of the Council. We shall not fail to transmit to you, in the same way, the replies of the interested Governments as soon as they have been received.

Before the Laval-Hoare Plan had thus been officially communicated to the Council of the League, it had virtually been rejected by the Abyssinian Government. On the 11th December the following statement had been issued by the Abyssinian Legation in Paris:

Ethiopia has been the victim of an unjustified act of aggression which has been solemnly and unanimously condemned by the Assembly of the League of Nations. In these conditions the Ethiopian Government are firmly resolved to set aside any proposals which, directly or indirectly, would offer a reward to the Italian aggressor; would disregard the fundamental principles affirmed by the League Council and its committees as well as the Assembly, in particular the principle of Ethiopian territorial and political integrity; and would tend to put pressure on a weak nation to accept the domination of a powerful Government who have never ceased to declare that they will assure by force the triumph of their ambition, with, without, or against the League of Nations.

On the 12th December the Abyssinian Legation in Paris transmitted to the Secretary-General of the League a declaration addressed by the Government at Addis Ababa to the President of the Assembly, the President of the Council and all the Members of the League. After announcing the reception of the Laval-Hoare Plan from the French and British Governments, and then rehearsing some of the pertinent facts in the international situation, the Abyssinian Government's declaration concluded:

Before replying to this proposal, the Ethiopian Government urgently

asks that the Assembly of the League of Nations be convened immediately in order that, by a full and free public debate, conducted frankly in the face of the World, free from all pressure, direct or indirect, every member state should be able to express its opinion on the true practical significance of the proposals submitted to Ethiopia and on the general problem of the conditions which are indispensable if a settlement between the victim of a properly established act of aggression and the aggressor Government is not, in practice, to result in destroying the League of Nations by bringing final ruin upon the system of guaranteed collective security provided for by the Covenant. The Ethiopian Government, taught by cruel experience, declares itself firmly opposed to all secret negotiations.

On the 13th the Secretary-General replied to this Abyssinian request by informing the Abyssinian Government<sup>1</sup> that he had immediately consulted the President of the Assembly and that the President considered it advisable, before taking a decision, to await the result of the deliberations of the Council, since the Council not only remained under the Covenant the organ to which the dispute had been duly submitted, but had also now been summoned to meet on the 18th in order to take cognizance of the Franco-British proposal. Thereafter, on the 18th December itself, the representative of Abyssinia transmitted from his Government to the Secretary-General a further declaration<sup>2</sup> in which both the terms of the Laval-Hoare Plan and the fashion in which it had been launched were subjected to a skilful and damaging criticism. A note in the same vein was subsequently addressed by the Abyssinian Government to the French and British Governments in reply to the communication which had been made on the 12th by the French and British Ministers at Addis Ababa.

The Laval-Hoare Plan was thus stillborn; and when the Council duly met on the 18th December it found itself officiating, not at a christening, but at a funeral at which Mr. Eden openly made haste to bury Caesar, while Monsieur Laval damned his own child with faint praise. Mr. Eden's speech to his fellow delegates on the Council on the 18th was a thinly disguised invitation to rescue the British Government from a false position in which they frankly regretted having placed themselves.

It is no easy task which the two Governments undertook, and, so far as His Majesty's Government is concerned, it had no illusion as to the difficulty. But . . ., with the good wishes of the [Co-ordination] Committee, the two Governments made the attempt. Indeed, though it may well be maintained that it has proved to be, at the present juncture

<sup>1</sup> Text of telegram in *League of Nations Official Journal*, January 1936, p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> Text in *op. cit.*, pp. 42-7.

of events, an almost impossible task, it was proper that the attempt should be made, however invidious the task of those who had to make it. For that I make no apology. Even if this attempt is to be unsuccessful, the essential importance of conciliation remains, as the League has frequently recognized. The principle therefore was right, even if its application in this instance may not have availed.

It must be emphasized that the Paris proposals which were put forward last week were not advanced as proposals to be insisted on in any event. They were advanced in order to ascertain what the views of the two parties and of the League might be upon them, and His Majesty's Government recommended them only for this purpose. If, therefore, it transpires that these proposals which are now before you do not satisfy the essential condition of agreement by the two parties and by the League, His Majesty's Government could not continue to recommend or support them. In its view, this particular attempt at conciliation could not then be regarded as having achieved its object, and His Majesty's Government, for its part, would not wish to pursue it further.

Monsieur Laval concentrated his efforts upon a half-hearted attempt to keep a breath of life astir in the body:

We do not yet know how the parties will welcome our suggestions, and I suppose that, in the meantime, the Council itself will wish to avoid expressing an opinion. In any case, I think it my duty to state forthwith that, if this effort does not secure the consent of all the interested parties, the Council will not be relieved of its duty to explore every avenue and to allow no opportunity to escape with a view to bringing about an honourable and just solution of the present conflict, such as is required both by the interests of peace and by the spirit of the League of Nations.

Monsieur Wolde Mariam (Ethiopia) pointed out the bearing of the Laval-Hoare Plan upon the prospects of the security of other countries besides his own:

Is it consistent with the Covenant that the Covenant-breaking state should be begged, by the League of Nations, to be good enough to accept a large part of its victim's territory, together with the effective control of the rest under the cloak of the League? Is the victim of the aggression who has always scrupulously conformed to all the procedures of the Treaties and of the Covenant—as the Assembly has unanimously acknowledged—to be invited by the League to submit to the aggressor and, in the interests of world peace, to abandon the defence of its independence and integrity against its powerful enemy, on the ground that the latter's resolve to exterminate its victim is unshakable? Is the victim to be placed under the implicit threat of abandonment by the League and to be deprived of all hope of succour? Should not this problem, which is vital to the future of international relations between all peoples, whatever their strength, their colour, or their race, be laid first of all before the League, and examined publicly there, in complete independence, under the eyes of the whole World?

After this it only remained for the Council to shovel a few perfunctory spadefuls of earth over the corpse, before meeting once more on the 19th to hear their President read the burial certificate:

The members of the Council, excluding the representatives of the parties, held an exchange of views this morning. My colleagues have requested me to place the result before the Council this afternoon in the form of a resolution, which I will read.

1. The Council thanks the representatives of France and of the United Kingdom for the communication which they have made to it concerning the suggestions which they have put before the two parties with a view to conciliation.

2. In view of the preliminary character of these suggestions, as emphasized by the two Powers which took the initiative of putting them forward, the Council does not consider that it is called upon to express an opinion in regard to them at present.

3. The Council instructs the Committee of Thirteen, bearing in mind the provisions of the Covenant, to examine the situation as a whole, as it may appear in the light of the information which the committee may procure.

With the adoption of this resolution, which followed forthwith, the Laval-Hoare Peace Plan was officially buried, as well as practically dead; and, for the French author of the plan, the shortness of its life must have been deeply disappointing. Yet Monsieur Laval could assuage his mortification with at least one consoling thought; for, from his point of view, the Peace Plan had lived and died not altogether in vain. Although it had not brought Signor Mussolini those gains at Abyssinia's expense that might (so the French hoped) have coaxed the Romagnol war-lord into sounding the 'cease fire' in Africa in order to stand at the 'ready', once more, at France's side in Europe, this diplomatic interlude had at least saved Monsieur Laval himself from having to make the doleful choice of giving mortal offence either to Italy by voting for the oil sanction or else to England by voting against it. The one positive consequence of the Laval-Hoare Plan—and it proved to be a result of far-reaching importance—was the shelving of the oil sanction for an indefinite time to come. On the afternoon of the 19th December the Committee of Eighteen met within three-quarters of an hour of the meeting of the Council in order to take note of the resolution which the Council had just adopted. After reading the Council's resolution aloud to his colleagues, Senhor de Vasconcellos observed that 'in consequence, the situation as it stood at the last meeting of the committee remained unchanged. The Committee of Experts would accordingly continue to follow the application of the sanctions in force, and the committee would no doubt desire him, as chairman, to remain in touch with the chairman of



the Committee of Thirteen with regard to the next meeting of the Committee of Eighteen'. The chairman's proposal was adopted; and therewith the oil sanction once more receded to a dim and distant horizon.

This was the end of the Laval-Hoare Plan at Geneva; its respective endings at Rome, London and Paris have still to be recorded.

From the 11th December (the day on which the Peace Plan had been officially communicated to him)<sup>1</sup> until the 18th, Signor Mussolini maintained a silence which was perhaps prompted at first by an anxiety not to appear to jump too eagerly at a chance of breaking off his African campaign, and afterwards by an even sharper anxiety not to appear to jump at all at a plan which so many other parties were now brusquely rejecting. This silence was broken on the 18th—in a speech plainly signifying the rejection of the plan—at the inauguration of Pontinia, the third of the new townships which the Fascist régime had founded on lands reclaimed from the Pomptine Marshes:

I wish to tell you that we will not send into the distant and barbarous lands the flower of our youth if we are not assured that it will be protected by the tricolour of the Fatherland. I wish also to say that the Italian people—a people little known in the world, where there are still circulating the old commonplaces of a false literature—the Italian people, which draws its nourishment from the soil with hard daily labour, is capable of resisting a very long siege, especially when it is certain in the clearness and tranquillity of its conscience that right is on its side while wrong is on the side of that Europe which in present events is doing dishonour to itself. That war which we have begun on African soil is a war of civilization and liberation. It is the war of the people. The Italian people feels it as its own. It is the war of the poor, of the disinherited, of the proletariat. Against us is ranged the front of conservatism, of selfishness, and of hypocrisy. Against this front also we have engaged in our stern struggle, and we will carry it through to the end. A people of 44,000,000, not merely of inhabitants but also of souls, does not allow itself to be throttled and still less to be tricked with impunity. Sure of this unanimous profound consent of all the Italian people—men, women, and children, the whole nation living in its historic and eternal expression—sure of this consent, the régime will go straight ahead. It could not and does not wish to do otherwise. This is a trial in which we are all engaged from the first to the last, but it is a trial which is testing the virility of the Italian people. It is a test, my comrades, from which we shall most certainly issue victorious. Time will be needed, but when a struggle has been engaged in, comrades, it is not so much time that counts, but the victory.

The French Ambassador, the Count de Chambrun, who was present at the ceremony and listened to the speech, was reported to have

<sup>1</sup> See p. 304, above.

been so deeply upset to see the fragile structure that had been deftly erected by French diplomacy thus abruptly<sup>1</sup> laid in ruins by a reverberating Italian blow that he took the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Signor Suvich, to task, there and then, in undiplomatically vehement language. From his own point of view, on the other hand, Signor Mussolini had perhaps been just in time in rejecting the Franco-British proposals; for he could hardly have postured as rejecting them on his own initiative if he had waited to receive the report of the funeral orations on the plan which were being pronounced at Geneva that afternoon, or the news of Sir Samuel Hoare's resignation, which was announced that evening.

At Rome at a later hour on the 18th December the Fascist Grand Council met and conveyed, through the Duce, a greeting to General de Bono in Tigre. On the night of the 21st-22nd, it met again and (in the words of the subsequent *communiqué*) 'again examined the political situation determined after the repudiation by Great Britain of the Paris proposals which were due to the initiative of France—proposals which the Fascist Grand Council had submitted to an ample examination in the meeting of the 18th December'. At the meeting of the 20th-21st, the Council passed the following resolution:

The Fascist Grand Council establishes that, in face of the confusion and the contradictions in the conduct of the sanctionist countries, the Italian people remains unshakably agreed in the strongest defence of its right, offering, by the plebiscite of the gold, an imposing proof of its will to resistance and victory;

Sends its trustful greeting to the soldiers and to the Blackshirts who are valorously fighting in East Africa for the cause of civilization and for the supreme exigencies of the security and the future of the nation.

Affirms that the action of Fascist Italy will continue, with inflexible decision, for the necessary attainment of the goals marked out by the Duce as the destiny of the Fatherland.

In an interview with Monsieur Laval on the 23rd December, the Italian Ambassador in Paris was reported to have intimated that the Franco-British proposals would receive no official reply from the Italian Government; and they were treated as a thing of the past by Signor Mussolini himself at a Cabinet meeting in Rome on the 30th. These 'provisional' proposals, Signor Mussolini is reported to have told his colleagues on this occasion, were far from satisfying Italy's minimum requirements—above all, with regard to the security of Italian frontiers and Italian subjects. Accordingly, he said, the pro-

<sup>1</sup> The blow was abrupt, for Signor Mussolini's intentions had remained a mystery down to the last moment. As lately as the 16th December the Italian Ambassador in London had called on Sir Robert Vansittart to ask for the elucidation of certain points in the Franco-British proposals.

posals had been doomed to come to grief as soon as they were published, and long before the Fascist Grand Council could consider them.

It remains to give some account of the parliamentary storms—a major storm in London and a minor storm in Paris—which both burst before the end of the calendar year after brewing up since the first divulgence of the nature of the plan in the French press on the 9th.

In the House of Commons at Westminster the division at the close of the debate on the 10th December had resulted automatically in a majority for the Government. On the same day, however, Mr. Baldwin bowed to the feeling in the House by agreeing to allot time for a debate on the international crisis. The date fixed was the 19th December, and the interest and feeling that had been aroused were reflected in the number and the tenor of the motions that were tabled during the intervening days. That motions censuring the Government's policy should be brought forward by the Labour and the Liberal Opposition was a matter of course; but the first critic in the field was a supporter of the Government, Mr. Vyvyan Adams, who tabled a resolution, as early as the 11th December, in the following terms:

That this House will not assent to any settlement of the Italo-Ethiopian dispute which ignores our international obligations under the Covenant of the League of Nations by granting the aggressor state greater concessions after its unprovoked aggression than could have been obtained by peaceful negotiations.

It was significant that such a resolution should have been drafted by one of the Government's own supporters in the Conservative Party's ranks; it was perhaps still more significant that a private member who stood at the extreme left wing of his party should have secured a large and rapidly augmented array of Conservative backers, many of whom stood considerably further to the right than Mr. Adams himself;<sup>1</sup> and although Mr. Adams's motion was actually withdrawn before the debate took place, the tabling of it had been not without effect, since its withdrawal secured the simultaneous withdrawal of at least two Conservative motions unreservedly supporting what the Government had done. Eventually the Labour Party motion of censure was countered by a Conservative amendment which, while distinctly less severe than Mr. Adams's resolution, represented perhaps the lowest measure of approbation that a Government must obtain from its supporters in order to be able to remain in office.

<sup>1</sup> See the list in *The Times*, 19th December, 1935.

The Labour motion ran as follows:

That the terms put forward by his Majesty's Government as a basis for an Italo-Abyssinian settlement reward the declared aggressor at the expense of the victim, destroy collective security, and conflict with the expressed will of the country and with the Covenant of the League of Nations, to the support of which the honour of Great Britain is pledged; this House therefore demands that these terms be immediately repudiated.

The Conservative amendment was in the following terms:

That this House, holding that any terms for settling the Italo-Abyssinian dispute should be such as the League can accept, assures His Majesty's Government of its full support in pursuing the foreign policy outlined in the Government manifesto and endorsed by the country at the recent General Election.

The perturbation which the Government's policy of endorsing the Laval-Hoare Plan had produced among the constituents of the Government's supporters in the House of Commons has been recorded in another chapter;<sup>1</sup> and this perturbation, which was reflected not only in Mr. Adams's motion but also in the substitute amendment to the Labour Party motion, induced Mr. Baldwin, on the eve of the debate, to turn left-about and sacrifice his Foreign Secretary after all, instead of persisting in his previous decision to sacrifice the foreign policy on the strength of which he had so recently won a general election.

The storm aroused by the publication of the terms of the plan must soon have convinced both Sir Samuel Hoare and his ministerial colleagues at Westminster that the Foreign Secretary ought to return forthwith from the Engadine to Chelsea; but misfortune dogged him; for, almost immediately after his arrival in the Swiss mountains, he broke his nose in skating on the ice; and though the accident was not serious in itself, it still further depressed the Foreign Secretary's already low state of health, delayed his return journey,<sup>2</sup> and kept him confined to his house after he had arrived in London on the 16th. Sir Samuel Hoare came home unrepentant; and at a Cabinet meeting which was held at No. 10 Downing Street on the morning of the 17th, his colleagues abode by their decision of the 9th December to support him.<sup>3</sup> This determination was at once conveyed to the convalescent

<sup>1</sup> See section (ii) (e) above.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Samuel Hoare travelled back to London from Switzerland not only on his own initiative but actually against doctor's orders; for his nose had been broken in three places, and he had been forbidden to go out of doors.

<sup>3</sup> From the 9th December to the 17th inclusive the Government's policy seems to have been consistent; for on the 13th December Mr. Baldwin had shown little apparent disposition to satisfy a deputation of distinguished representatives of the League of Nations Union whom he received that morning.

Foreign Secretary by a deputation of the Cabinet consisting of the Prime Minister, Mr. Eden and Mr. Neville Chamberlain; and it was apparently arranged that on the 19th Sir Samuel Hoare should make a fighting speech from the Treasury Bench, and that the debate should be wound up by Mr. Baldwin. At the eleventh hour, however, the Prime Minister bent to the storm of public indignation; the party in the Cabinet which had never whole-heartedly approved of Mr. Baldwin's personal policy of 'men not measures' at last won the day; and, after receiving further visits from Mr. Neville Chamberlain and Mr. Baldwin on the 18th, Sir Samuel Hoare placed his resignation in Mr. Baldwin's hands that evening.

Sir Samuel Hoare's resignation had a number of consequences, some public and others personal. In the first place, it advertised to the World, with a clarity that could not be mistaken, the fact that the people of the United Kingdom had repudiated the Peace Plan with which Sir Samuel Hoare had been induced to associate himself through the arts of Monsieur Laval. In the second place, the resignation of the immediately responsible Minister assured—at the price of an undisguised moral defeat—the formal victory of the Government in the forthcoming debate in the House of Commons, and thereby eliminated any possibility that the Government as a whole might share Sir Samuel Hoare's fate. The third consequence of Sir Samuel Hoare's fall was in large measure to transfer the odium for the Laval-Hoare Plan—as far as this odium had to fall on some British statesman's shoulders—from Sir Samuel Hoare himself to Mr. Baldwin.

The *ci-devant* Foreign Secretary's countrymen were quick to appreciate the fact that the fallen statesman was sincerely convinced of the virtue of the plan to which he had lent his name, now that he had held to this conviction at the cost of forfeiting his office. And the penalty which Sir Samuel Hoare thus paid no later than the 18th December went far to allay the animus which had been aroused against him by his apparent weakness of will and faultiness of judgment on the 7th and 8th. On the other hand, Mr. Baldwin purchased a prolongation of his tenure of political power at the cost of a decline in personal repute which threatened to be as irretrievable as it was sharp. The censure that he had brought upon himself through his decision on the 9th to abandon a policy and default on an election pledge rather than dismiss a colleague was not appeased, but on the contrary was redoubled in intensity, by his recantation of this decision on the 18th. The decision of the 9th, however wrong-headed, might readily have been forgiven as the well-meaning blunder of a soft-hearted man who had been taken by surprise; the recantation of the

18th could only be read as a second exhibition of culpable weakness which was redeemed by no touch of personal loyalty and which afforded no guarantee that the Prime Minister had genuinely resumed his allegiance to the foreign policy on which he had won his recent general election. The doubt remained whether Mr. Baldwin had ever been sincere in hoisting the League of Nations flag at the Conservative Party's masthead. In the minds of many of his countrymen who differed from him in politics, Mr. Baldwin had hitherto typified the English character as it pleased the English to picture it to themselves: the character of a man who might not be a genius, but who was unmistakably free from guile.<sup>1</sup> Was it conceivable that the Prime Minister's plain English countenance was a mask which was now revealing, underneath it, the poker face of the British hypocrite as portrayed by foreigners? This hideous doubt, once instilled, could never again be completely exorcized.<sup>2</sup>

In consequence of Sir Samuel Hoare's resignation, the arrangements for the conduct of the debate on the 19th December were changed. The proceedings opened, immediately after question time, with a personal apologia on the part of the late Foreign Secretary (now seated no longer on the Treasury Bench, but on the third bench below the gangway on the Government side of the House). Mr. Attlee then moved the Labour vote of censure, Mr. Baldwin replied, and, after Sir Austen Chamberlain and Sir Archibald Sinclair had also spoken, Lord Winterton moved the amendment and Mr. Neville Chamberlain wound up.<sup>3</sup> The victory of the Government in the division was now just as much a foregone conclusion as it had been on the 10th, but this was not the significant feature of that day's business in the House.

Sir Samuel Hoare's speech not only presented a review of the events that had led up to his action in Paris on the 7th and 8th December, with an analysis of the plan with which he had associated himself; it also gave an account—which was manifestly sincere and candid—

<sup>1</sup> According to legend, the masterpiece of Disraeli's career had been to give, on one occasion, precisely this reassuring impression of himself to an evangelical constituent. 'Well, how did Disraeli strike you?' the constituent's friends asked him when the audience was over; and the answer was: 'Well, he may not be a very clever man, but I am sure he is a very good one!'

<sup>2</sup> The shock of public disillusionment over this revelation of unsuspected elements in Mr. Baldwin's character was recorded visually in a cartoon by Low—published in *The Evening Standard* of the 20th December—which was as merciless as it was brilliant. It would be difficult for any one who had set eyes on this cartoon ever to think quite the same of Mr. Baldwin again.

<sup>3</sup> A fuller exposition of Mr. Chamberlain's point of view at this time will be found in a speech which he delivered at Birmingham next day, the 20th December, 1935.

of the considerations which had moved the speaker to act as he had done.

Day in and day out I have been obsessed with the urgent necessity of doing everything in my power to prevent a European conflagration. Secondly, I have been no less obsessed with the urgent duty of doing everything in my power to avoid an isolated war between Great Britain and Italy . . . From all sides we received reports, that no responsible Government could disregard, that Italy would regard the oil embargo as a military sanction or act involving war against them . . . what was in our mind was . . . that an isolated attack of this kind launched upon one Power, without, it may be, the full support of the other Powers, would . . . almost inevitably lead to the dissolution of the League.

There followed a passage—morally, the most telling point in the speech—which could not be read without shame and remorse by any of Sir Samuel Hoare's countrymen on the date on which the present lines were being written (the 5th May, 1936). And although this passage has been quoted already in this volume in another context,<sup>1</sup> it cannot be omitted in this place:

I have been terrified with the thought—I speak very frankly to the House—that we might lead Abyssinia on to think that the League could do more than it can do—that in the end we should find a terrible moment of disillusionment in which it may be that Abyssinia would be destroyed altogether as an independent state. I have been terrified at that position, and I could not help thinking of the past, in which more than once in our history we have given, and rightly given, all our sympathies to some threatened or downtrodden race, but, because we have been unable to implement and give effect to those sympathies, all that we had done was to encourage them, with the result that in the end their fate was worse than it would have been without our sympathy

These words addressed to the speaker's own countrymen were balanced by another passage which was addressed to the citizens of other states members and which likewise deserved to be taken to heart in the light of the sequel:

Now that we are entering upon this new chapter in the war, it is essential, if collective defence is to be real and effective, that we go beyond the period of general protestations and that we should have actual proof by action from the member states that are concerned. . . . We alone have taken these military precautions. There is the British Fleet in the Mediterranean, there are the British reinforcements in Egypt, in Malta and Aden. Not a ship, not a machine, not a man has been moved by any other member state. Now that negotiations have failed, we must have something more than these general protestations of loyalty to the League. . . . Without this active co-operation it will be impossible to have more than an unsatisfactory peace. You cannot have a hundred per cent. peace if you have only got five per cent.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 69, above.

co-operation that goes to the making of it . . . Unless these facts are faced, and are faced in the immediate future, either the League will break up, or a most unsatisfactory peace will result from the conflict that is now taking place.

The speech concluded with a stalwart reaffirmation of the speaker's belief in the policy with which he had identified himself:

I say in all humility to the House that my conscience is clear. . . . Looking back at the position in which I was placed a fortnight ago, I say to the House that I cannot honestly recant, and I sincerely believe that the course that I took was the only course that was possible in the circumstances . . . I believe, in the future when opinion is somewhat less excited than it is to-day, that at any rate some of my friends will think that there were better reasons for the course I took than they think to-day.

In avowing that, nevertheless, he had at least temporarily lost his countrymen's confidence, and that this was the reason why he had resigned, Sir Samuel Hoare—having thereby completed his statement—broke down and left the House.

Mr. Baldwin's speech contained a confession about himself, an admission with regard to the Peace Plan and an accusation against his fellow-countrymen.

The confession was to the following effect:

Never throughout that week had I or any one of my colleagues any idea in our own minds that we were not being true to every pledge that we had given in the election. . . . I was not expecting that deeper feeling which was manifested by many of my honourable friends in many parts of the country on what I may call the ground of conscience and of honour. The moment I am confronted with that, I know that something has happened that has appealed to the deepest feelings of our countrymen, that some note has been struck that brings back from them a response from the depths. I examined again all that I had done, and I felt that with that feeling, which was perfectly obvious, there could not be the support in this country behind those proposals, even as terms of negotiation. I felt that there could not be that volume of popular opinion which it is necessary to have in a democracy behind the Government in a matter so important as this.

The admission was laconic:

It is perfectly obvious now that the proposals are absolutely and completely dead. This Government is certainly going to make no attempt to resurrect them.

The Prime Minister's indictment of the people of the United Kingdom, which has been quoted already in this volume,<sup>1</sup> was perhaps more serious than he himself realized when he was making it:

I am as anxious as any one on any bench in this House not only to preserve the League of Nations but to make it effective, not only now

<sup>1</sup> On p. 78, above.



but in the future, and if by any chance—and I will only put it like that—this country had to take part in a unilateral war, even for a short time before others could come in, what I dread is the reaction in this country. I am not thinking of any campaign that might be organized against the Government for bringing the country into war, I am thinking of this: that men will say ‘Well, if by adherence to the League of Nations we find ourselves standing alone to do what ought to be done by everybody, this is the last time we will allow a Government to commit itself with regard to collective security because, for all we know, the next time we have to employ this, the field may be nearer home than the Mediterranean’.

At the time of writing this indictment still stood unanswered, and Sir Samuel Hoare’s parting prayer, as he left the House of Commons on the 19th December, 1935, that his successor might have better luck than he had had, was still lying on the knees of the Gods. Sir Samuel Hoare’s successor in the Secretaryship of State for Foreign Affairs was Mr. Anthony Eden, who had served as Lord Privy Seal from the 1st January, 1934, to the 7th June, 1935, when he had been appointed Minister without Portfolio for League of Nations Affairs. The new appointment, which was announced on the 22nd December, was as popular in Great Britain as it was unwelcome in Italy.

It remains to record how Monsieur Laval’s ship just succeeded in weathering the storm in which Sir Samuel Hoare’s ship had foundered.

The attack upon Monsieur Laval in the Chamber in Paris was opened on parallel lines to those on which Sir Samuel Hoare was attacked in the House of Commons at Westminster—Mr. Vyvyan Adams’s part being taken, in France, by Monsieur Pierre Cot, a left-wing member of the Radical-Socialist Party who had been Minister for the Air in Governments formed by Monsieur Daladier in January 1933, by Monsieur Sarraut in October 1933 and by Monsieur Daladier again in January 1934. On the 13th December Monsieur Cot gave notice of a parliamentary question implying a condemnation of Monsieur Laval’s policy; and on the 14th Monsieur Cot’s question, as well as a motion in the same sense which had been drafted by Monsieur Archimbaud, was discussed at a Radical-Socialist party meeting. On this occasion Monsieur Cot was authorized by his colleagues to speak on the party’s behalf in an eventual debate in the Chamber on foreign affairs; but the distaste for Monsieur Laval’s policy, which was the general sense of the meeting, did not carry the Radical-Socialist deputies to the point of committing the positively hostile act of adopting Monsieur Archimbaud’s draft motion; and they reconciled their hesitation to attack the Government with their disapproval of its policy by abstaining from the adoption of any motion at all, and

contenting themselves, instead, with the publication of a *communiqué* declaring that the meeting had 'expressed its fidelity to the principles of collective security and indivisible peace'; that it had declared itself in favour 'of a just and speedy peace which would not be such as to encourage violations of the Covenant'; and that it had given voice to the hope 'that there would be negotiations—carried out under the authority of the League of Nations—which would make it possible to arrive at an honourable compromise which would prove acceptable alike for the League, Italy and Ethiopia'.

In the Chamber on the 13th December, Monsieur Cot delivered a brief attack on Monsieur Laval's policy and announced that he would ask Monsieur Laval, upon his return from Geneva,<sup>1</sup> to allot time for a debate on Monsieur Cot's question at an early date. On this occasion, Monsieur Cot was supported by Monsieur Moulet on behalf of the Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière and by Monsieur Bibié on behalf of the Union Socialiste.

On the 17th December, when Monsieur Laval found himself once more in Paris, he had a preliminary encounter in the Chamber with his adversaries. The proceedings began with the reading, by Monsieur Laval himself, of a statement<sup>2</sup> in which he gave, in brief, his own version of the history of the Laval-Hoare Plan and then threw down a challenge to his opponents:

Did they wish to resort to an integral and brutal application of all the sanctions? Did they wish to go back upon the decision taken at Geneva, where no sanctions except those of an economic order had ever been contemplated? The responsible delegates of the different countries had been acting deliberately when they had determined to limit the application of the Covenant to certain measures. They had been acting deliberately in wishing to eliminate all risk of war in Europe.

In reply to a demand from a Radical-Socialist and a Socialist spokesman for a debate, Monsieur Laval offered the date of the 27th December; on behalf of the Radical-Socialist Party, Monsieur Cot asked for the 20th; and, after a duel between Monsieur Laval and Monsieur Blum, the date of the 27th was adopted by the Chamber by 304 votes to 252.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 305, above.

<sup>2</sup> While Monsieur Laval was reading this statement, Monsieur Herriot was observed to be sitting with his arms folded in a posture of ostentatious dissociation from the apologia of the head of the Government of which Monsieur Herriot himself was a member. That very evening Monsieur Herriot resigned the leadership of the Radical-Socialist Party, but not his post in Monsieur Laval's Ministry. The considerations which moved Monsieur Herriot to resign the Party leadership need not be examined here, since their connexion (if there was any connexion) with the international crisis seems to have been slight.

When the 27th December arrived, the Chamber had before it an anti-Governmental motion in the names of MM. Delbos, Campinchi and Pierre Cot, and an approbatory motion, accepted in advance by the Government itself, in the names of MM. Chappedelaine, Dariac and Thellier. The outcome of this debate in the French Chamber, which occupied two days, was not a foregone conclusion, as had been that of the debate in the House of Commons at Westminster on the 19th. For one thing, Monsieur Laval could not count with such confidence as Mr. Baldwin upon receiving automatically the votes of all his nominal supporters; and, in the second place, the loyalty of Monsieur Laval's Radical-Socialist supporters was subjected, on the 27th-28th December, to a strain which, at Westminster on the 19th, had not been placed upon the loyalty of the National Liberal and Left-Wing Conservative supporters of Mr. Baldwin. When the Laval-Hoare Plan was debated in the House of Commons on the 19th, its English author was already out of office on account of his share in the authorship, while the plan itself was jettisoned by the Prime Minister in the most emphatic language that he could well have found for the purpose. On the other hand, in Paris on the 27th-28th December, Monsieur Laval met the Chamber in the doubly responsible dual capacity of both Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs; he frankly declared his regret that the plan had miscarried; he announced his intention of persevering in the policy which had just received this rebuff; and he challenged the Chamber to turn him out of office on this account. These were the circumstances in which, at the close of the debate, Monsieur Laval asked the Chamber to reject the demand that the Delbos-Campinchi-Cot motion should be given priority, and then to pass the Chappedelaine-Dariac-Thellier motion as a declaration of confidence in the Government. When the vote was taken, the anti-governmental motion was refused priority by 296 votes to 276, and the pro-governmental motion was then carried by 304 votes to 261. The majorities were narrow, yet, for Monsieur Laval on this occasion, even a bare victory meant a signal success. It was significant that, in both the two successive divisions, Monsieur Laval was saved from defeat by a split in the Radical-Socialist ranks. In the first division, he would not have obtained his majority of 20 if 37 Radical Socialists had not voted among the 'Noes' as against 93 of them among the 'Ayes'; and in the second division he would not have obtained his majority of 43 if 44 Radical Socialists had not voted among the 'Ayes' as against 83 of them among the 'Noes'.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There were also 14 Radical-Socialist abstentions and 8 absences in the first division, while the corresponding figures in the second were 18 and 7.

On the 27th, as on the 17th, the debate was opened by a declaration on the part of Monsieur Laval himself:

The essential question that has to be asked is the question whether the policy that I have pursued is, or is not, in conformity with the interests of our country. That is the only question that ought to be examined in the French Chamber

I do not regret the effort that I have made some day or other, peace will have to be restored. The point is whether I have defaulted on the obligations into which France has entered *vis-à-vis* the League of Nations and whether I have compromised our present and future security . . .

Are you not afraid, I am asked, that you may one day have cause to regret having set limits upon the means which might be placed by other countries at the disposal of France to safeguard her or to defend her against some future act of aggression? This is the most serious charge that is brought against us. Is it well-founded? . . .

The action of the League of Nations in the present crisis has been, and may continue to be, impeded by difficulties without its being permissible to draw from this instance any valid conclusion against the general principle of collective security. . . .

If you bring up against me a loss of harmony between ourselves and the British Government, I reply that . . . I have not done less than my duty towards the cause of Franco-British co-operation. I have maintained intact the solidarity that unites our two countries . . .

In the subsequent speeches, Monsieur Laval's perhaps rather perfunctory tribute to the virtues of Franco-British co-operation was supplemented by observations—and this not only on the part of Monsieur Laval's opponents—which showed a greater understanding of British psychology and of the policy in which it expressed itself. An indulgent reference to the point was made by one of Monsieur Laval's supporters, Monsieur Taittinger:

The English have a touch of the friar predicant about them. Whatever party they belong to, they consider that they have a mission to instruct the World. One must not make fun of them for their League of Nations mysticism.

A perhaps deeper insight into the British state of mind, and a certainly more serious consideration of it, were displayed to the Chamber by Monsieur Paul Reynaud: a member of the Republican Centre who had been present in the visitors' gallery in the House of Commons at Westminster on the 19th December. Monsieur Reynaud was the rightmost deputy in the Chamber to speak and vote against Monsieur Laval on the 27th–28th; he was the only member of his party to take this line; and he paid for this originality by having to resign the secretaryship of the group. His was, in fact, a voice crying in the wilderness. Yet his speech in the French Chamber on the 27th December, 1935, seemed likely to be of historic interest on account

of the grasp, which it revealed, of facts which singularly few French minds at the time seemed able—or, at any rate, willing—to face.

Monsieur Reynaud gave his fellow deputies an analysis of British public opinion, told them the history of 'the Peace Ballot', and begged them to believe that the British motive in seeking to vindicate the Covenant against Signor Mussolini was not a concern for British interests of a local and concrete kind like the route to India or the waters of the Blue Nile. The Laval-Hoare agreement, he said, was quite in harmony with British interests; but all of a sudden the current of popular feeling had burst out, and the British people had placed a moral idea above everything else.

The rebuff given [in England] to the Laval-Hoare agreement is a victory for a French doctrine which has given us, at Geneva, the leadership among the nations. This is the opinion of the small states . . . And now, in rallying to our doctrine, England has been parting company with ourselves!

Before resuming his seat, Monsieur Reynaud placed before his countrymen a choice which they were anxious, above all things, to avoid having to make—

the obligation which we have tried to evade, but which is none the less imperious, of choosing between Italy, the breaker of the Covenant, and England, its champion.<sup>1</sup>

The debate was wound up on the 28th by a second speech from Monsieur Laval which took the form of an able *résumé* of the history of the crisis, interspersed with sudden sharp thrusts at his opponents in the Chamber.

One such thrust pointed his exposition of the oil sanction:

I should like to remind the Chamber that the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles<sup>2</sup> legally involves the ratification of all acts deriving from it—with one exception: in case of a general or partial mobilization, there has to be a decree which requires very prompt ratification by Parliament. Well, then! In a question like the oil question—a question which seems to all of you particularly grave—you are sovereign, you are the mandatories of the nation, and I am not indisposed—far from it—to ask you in advance for your opinion on the question, and this in whatever form you prefer. This method at any rate gives you a safeguard—you cannot deny it—against any alleged weakness of mine.

Monsieur Laval's parting shot was a reference to the budget and the franc—for which, as he well knew, his prospective successors in

<sup>1</sup> Monsieur Reynaud's views were developed further in an open letter to Monsieur André Tardieu, which was published in *Le Temps* of the 1st January, 1936.

<sup>2</sup> The Treaty of Versailles embodied the Covenant of the League of Nations.  
—A. J. T.

office had no desire to assume responsibility when a general election was only four months off.

I have finished. The vote which you are now going to cast is serious. What is at stake is not the fate of the Government. I have now had fifteen months at the Quai d'Orsay, and since June I have been Prime Minister as well. You have imposed heavy tasks on me. With the collaboration of my colleagues—yes, of all my colleagues—we have been able to defend the franc, and, if the vote of the Chamber allows it, within the next two days the budget will be passed.<sup>1</sup> (Interruptions on the extreme Left) Am I to understand that you would be sorry? What is at stake is the orientation of the whole foreign policy of France. You are the representatives of the people and its responsible mandates: make your choice!

This was the line on which, on the 27th–28th December, 1935, Monsieur Laval fought his battle in the Chamber and won it—albeit by the narrow majority recorded above. He was to fall from power on the 22nd January, 1936, yet, even if he were never to return to office, he had not to fear oblivion; for he had already made upon the tragically interwoven histories of Africa and Europe a mark which was as individual as it was indelible.

**(x) The Report of the Committee of Experts regarding Petroleum and its Derivatives, and the Italian Government's Declaration of the Annexation of Abyssinia to Italy (January–May 1936).**

The collapse of the Laval-Hoare Peace Plan and the successive falls of the British and the French statesmen by whom the plan had been sponsored have been recorded in the preceding chapter. These three events determined, between them, that the Italo-Abyssinian conflict should not be settled by a private arrangement—presented as an act of 'conciliation'—between the French and British Governments on the one side and Signor Mussolini on the other, over the head of the Emperor of Ethiopia. This result proved to be important; but its importance also proved to be negative; for while the outburst of public feeling in Great Britain, which had been evoked by the revelation of the plan, availed to bring the plan to naught, British public opinion was neither sufficiently clear-sighted nor sufficiently ready to pay the price of its own convictions to succeed in bringing the conflict to an alternative outcome corresponding with the British view of the rights and wrongs of the case. Accordingly, the defeat of the Laval-Hoare Plan did not rout the forces

<sup>1</sup> See the *Survey for 1935*, vol. i, pp. 390–2.—A. J. T.

that were in the field against the League of Nations and against its supporters in Great Britain and in a number of other states members whose peoples and Governments were ready to follow a British lead if it were offered to them. The only effect of the events of December 1935 during the next six months was to give rein to these still undefeated forces to work themselves out in other ways which were, if possible, even less welcome than the Laval-Hoare Plan itself had been to the British people.

Within this period the Italian military operations in East Africa were not only carried on without being seriously impeded by the action of the sanction-taking Powers; they were also crowned with a success which was much more rapid, as well as more far-reaching, than had been expected, even by professional military observers, judging by the actual course of the first three months of the war and by the inherent difficulties<sup>1</sup> of Marshal Badoglio's task. The withdrawal of the Emperor Haile Selassie from Ethiopian territory on the 2nd May, 1936, and the occupation of his capital, Addis Ababa, by the Italian invaders three days later, on the 5th May, marked the break-down of organized Abyssinian military resistance to the Italian act of aggression just seven months after the crossing of the frontier by the Italian forces on the 3rd October, 1935. It remained to be seen whether the Italians would now be able to subdue, pacify, organize, develop and colonize the vast Ethiopian territories which they had overrun; but, whatever the next act on the East African stage might be, it was plain that the first act was now over.

It was also plain that the licence thus granted to Italy by her fellow states members of the League to push to this extreme point the Italian breach of their common Covenant was due to the continued operation of two factors which had been working in the aggressor's favour ever since the Italian threat to Abyssinia had first emerged above the international horizon. The first of these factors was the fixed resolve of the French Government to conserve Italy as the future ally of France against Germany even at the present cost of wrecking the League of Nations; the second factor was the almost equally strong purpose of the British Government to keep out of war—and, indeed, out of the most remote risk of war—with Italy, even at the cost of allowing utter defeat to overtake the British Government's own genuine desire for the vindication of the Covenant. In pursuing their respective policies, the British and French Governments were neither enthusiastically supported nor energetically re-

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 361 *seqq.*, below.

sisted by their electorates. The explosion of anger in Great Britain in December 1935 was a flash in the pan which may have actually made it casier for the prevailing forces to take their course, just because the success of this outburst in overthrowing the Laval-Hoare Plan enabled these explosive British feelings to discharge themselves in a gesture which was emotionally satisfying without being practically effective.

With this preface, we may now record the course of diplomatic events during the first five months of the year 1936. As the war in East Africa moved towards its tragic climax, diplomacy in Europe came to be concerned not merely with the question of frustrating the Italian act of aggression but also with accusations of atrocities in the conduct of the war which were made against both belligerents. On the one hand, the Abyssinians were accused by the Italian Government of individual acts of barbarity against the Italian dead, wounded and prisoners. On the other hand, the Italians were accused—and this by the British and Swedish Governments, as well as by the Abyssinian Government—of misconduct which, if proved, would implicate not merely individual Italian airmen but also the Italian High Command at Asmara and the Italian Government at Rome. The Italians were accused of deliberately bombing Red Cross hospitals and units, both Abyssinian and foreign; of deliberately bombing Abyssinian open towns; and of using poison gas—in violation of the protocol of the 17th June, 1925—both against the Abyssinian armed forces in the field and against the Abyssinian civil population behind the front and even outside the war zone.<sup>1</sup> This last atrocity could only have been committed on the initiative of the highest authorities of the Italian state; and the bombing of open towns, and of the Red Cross, was so persistent—according to the accusations which the Italians had to meet—that at least the High Command in East Africa, if not the Government in Rome, was brought under suspicion of having countenanced and abetted a form of misconduct which might conceivably have started as the irresponsible action of individual Italian Air Force officers.

The year 1936 was inaugurated by protests from both the Abyssinian and the Swedish Governments against the bombing by Italian airmen, on the 30th December, 1935, of the Swedish Red Cross unit attached to Ras Desta's army on the westernmost sector of the Southern Front.<sup>2</sup> The Emperor of Ethiopia's protest was received by the Secretary-General of the League of Nations at Geneva on the

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 409 *seqq.*, below.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 411-12, below.



1st January. On the same day the Swedish Minister in Rome called on the Italian Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and was told by Signor Suvich that the act had been one of reprisal for the alleged beheading (by Abyssinians and not by Swedes!) of a captured Italian airman. There was a further meeting between the same two persons on the 7th, and on the 14th the Swedish Government addressed to the Italian Government a strongly worded note of protest. Signor Suvich replied on the 17th with a counter-charge that the Swedish Red Cross unit had been giving unlawful assistance to the Abyssinians in their military operations. The Swedish Red Cross Society denied the charge, and on the 5th March the Swedish Government addressed a second note to the Italian Government, maintaining that the outrage had been wilful and not accidental, and demanding compensation for the loss of life and property.

A rumour that a new attempt at 'conciliation' was afoot, with the King of the Belgians in the rôle of MM. Laval and Hoare, obtained currency during the second week of January and was given a *démenti* by the Belgian Government on the 13th. There was a simultaneous rumour that Signor Mussolini was designing to turn the tables on the Emperor Haile Selassie, and at the same time to prepare the ground for a peace settlement to his own liking, by taking up a proposal, which the Emperor had made on the 3rd January, 1936, that the League of Nations should send a commission of investigation to Abyssinia to inquire into the manner in which hostilities were being conducted by both belligerents, but suggesting that, instead of carrying out the Emperor's request, this commission should inquire into Italian allegations of Amharan misgovernment and should thereby pave the way for a recommendation from the League of Nations that Italy should be given a mandate for improving the administration of the Ethiopian Empire. This rumour in regard to Italian diplomatic designs was referred to in a declaration by the Ethiopian Government which was forwarded on the 20th January by the Ethiopian Minister in Paris to the Secretary-General of the League for communication to the Council, to the Committee of Thirteen and to the Governments of all the states members.

In the same document the Ethiopian Government put on record their 'recognition of the immense value of the moral support that had been accorded' to them; but they went on to recall that, so far, they had 'not obtained from the League of Nations either indirect assistance in the shape of irresistible economic measures or any form of direct assistance'. Ethiopia, the note continued, had never demanded armed assistance, and did not now demand it; but at the

same time the Government asked whether they were 'to give up hope of the aid which' they 'would obtain from the imposition [upon Italy] of further economic embargoes and from the financial assistance which' they had 'claimed, since the opening of the hostilities'.<sup>1</sup> They also asked whether the League did not consider that the aggressor ought to be prevented from succeeding, and whether in that case the states members, acting together, ought not to display their strength and their unity in a way which would make it thoroughly clear, at last, that aggression did not pay.

These were the circumstances in which the Committee of Thirteen discussed the Italo-Abyssinian affair on the 20th January, for the first time since the meeting of the Council on the 19th December,<sup>2</sup> and drew up a report which was adopted by the Council on the 23rd in the presence, but without the concurrence, of Baron Aloisi. This report, on which the Italian delegate abstained from voting, rejected the Abyssinian demand for financial assistance on the plea that the Convention for Financial Assistance, to which the Ethiopian Government had referred, had not yet come into force, and that there appeared to be no possibility of providing for the organization of financial assistance at the present moment (a very different response from that which had been made by the financially strong Powers to their indigent allies in the War of 1914-18). The report also let drop the Abyssinian request for a commission of inquiry on the spot, on the strength of a statement, which appeared in the Ethiopian communication of the 20th January, that such an inquiry was now regarded by the Ethiopian Government as being 'of less value'. Up to this point the report provided little comfort for the Abyssinians. It went on, however, to declare that, for the time being, the Committee of Thirteen saw 'no opportunity of facilitating and hastening the settlement of the dispute through an agreement between the parties within the framework of the Covenant'. In other words, the committee reported that the conciliatory action—for the sake of which Monsieur Laval had persuaded Sir Samuel Hoare to agree to a postponement of the oil sanction—was not now (even if it ever had been) practical politics; and this pronouncement opened the door for a fresh attempt to put the oil sanction into operation. Accordingly the Committee of Eighteen met on the 22nd January, two days after the meeting of the Committee of Thirteen, and passed on that day—which was the day before the adoption

<sup>1</sup> The Abyssinian Government had submitted a formal request for financial assistance on the 1st November, 1935.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 311-12, above.

of the Committee of Thirteen's report by the Council on the 23rd — a resolution in the following terms:

The Committee of Eighteen,

Recalling its Proposal IV A, of the 6th November, 1935, to the effect that measures of embargo should be extended to certain articles as soon as the conditions necessary to render this extension effective had been realized;

Subject to the proposals which it may see fit to submit on this question to the political decision of Governments:

Decides to create a Committee of Experts to conduct a technical examination of the conditions governing the trade in and transport of petroleum and its derivatives, by-products and residues, with a view to submitting an early report to the Committee of Eighteen on the effectiveness of the extension of measures of embargo to the above-mentioned commodities;

Requests its President to invite certain Governments to appoint experts to serve on a Committee for this purpose.

'In accordance with the terms of this resolution, the President of the Co-ordination Committee requested certain Governments to send experts to meet in Geneva on the 3rd February. The committee, which met under the chairmanship of Monsieur Gomez (Mexico) from the 3rd February to the 12th February, was composed of experts designated by the Governments of the United Kingdom, France, Iran, 'Irāq, Mexico, [the] Netherlands, Norway, Peru, Rumania, Sweden and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The Venezuelan Government sent an observer.

'At the opening meeting, the President of the Co-ordination Committee submitted a list of questions to the experts, which, after certain minor modifications, was adopted by them as their agenda. The President emphasized the fact that the Committee of Eighteen desired at this stage to submit to a technical examination only the whole problem of the effectiveness of an embargo on petroleum products.'<sup>1</sup> And the committee then appointed three sub-committees to study, respectively, the general problem of consumption and supplies, the possible use of substitutes and the question of transport. The committee itself presented its report on the 12th February.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Committee of Experts for the Technical Examination of the Conditions governing the Trade in, and Transport of, Petroleum and its Derivatives, By-Products and Residues* (British White Paper *Ethiopia No. 3* [Cmd. 5094] of 1936), pp. 3-4. The text was also published as the League of Nations Document *General. 1936. 1.*)

<sup>2</sup> The report was accompanied by three annexes and four appendices: Annex 1, Supply and Consumption; Annex 2, Substitutes, Annex 3, Transport; Appendix I, Imports of Petroleum into Italy, 1931-4; Appendix II, Imports of Petroleum into Italy, 1935; Appendix III, World Production of Petroleum; Appendix IV, World Oil-Tanker Fleet.

In regard to the questions of imports, consumption, stocks and sources of supply, the text of the report ran as follows:

(a) *Imports*

The total supplies of petroleum and petroleum products to Italy in the years 1932 to 1934, excluding bunker oil purchases by Italian ships in foreign ports for current needs, amounted on an average to approximately  $2\frac{1}{2}$  million tons per annum, of which rather more than  $1\frac{3}{4}$  million tons were fuel oil.

These purchases have increased steadily from a total of about 2 million tons in 1931 to nearly 3 million tons in 1934, a tendency to be found in other principal consuming countries. There was a further increase in 1935, when it is believed that purchases may have amounted to about 3·8 million tons.

Of the increase of 800,000 tons, it will be seen from section (c) below that some 300,000 tons (i.e. about 40 per cent. of the increase) is estimated to have been added to stock.

(b) *Consumption*

There are no reasons for supposing that Italy was accumulating abnormal stocks of petroleum prior to 1935. It is probable, therefore, that her consumption of petroleum products up to the end of 1934 was approximately equal to her total purchases. Italy's normal consumption in recent years had increased at the rate of about 13 per cent. per annum. Assuming that a similar increase had taken place in 1935 and allowing for some increase in Italian consumption due to greater industrial and military activity, consumption in that year would have amounted to 3·5 million tons. This figure includes the consumption in the theatre of war estimated to amount during the last five months of the year to a figure of 20,000 to 30,000 tons per month.

(c) *Stocks*

The total stock at the end of 1934 probably averaged about six weeks' to two months' supply, or 400,000 to 500,000 tons. If to this be added the difference between the purchases and estimated consumption in 1935, amounting to 300,000 tons, a total of 700,000 to 800,000 tons on the 31st December, 1935, is obtained. Stocks may have increased during January 1936 by a further 50,000 tons, and, at the end of January, may, therefore, have been equivalent to some two and a half to three months' consumption.

If an embargo were imposed, there would be at the moment of its imposition certain supplies *en route*, representing about half a month's supply to be added to the stocks already in hand.

(d) *Sources of Supply*

The most important sources from which world markets derive their supplies of petroleum are Colombia, Iran, 'Irāq, Mexico, the Netherlands East Indies, Peru, Rumania, Trinidad, the United States of America, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Venezuela. All

these countries, with the exception of the United States of America, are themselves members of, or are territories belonging to members of, the Co-ordination Committee.

The largest exporters of oil are Venezuela and the United States of America. The former reports no direct exports to Italy.

Substantial quantities of Venezuelan crude oil are normally refined in the Netherlands West Indies, and refined products are exported from these islands to Italy.

From the figures at the disposal of the committee, it is clear that the quantity of oil products available for export from the United States of America greatly exceeds Italy's probable demands. In past years relatively small quantities of oil products have been exported from the United States to Italy. In the period 1931 to 1934 the average percentages of Italy's total supplies provided by the United States were as follows:

Crude oil	14.9
Petrol	9.4
Kerosene	5.2
Fuel oil	3.5
Lubricating oil	48.3
Total	6.6

During the last few months these exports have shown a very large increase. It is not known whether the recent increase in exports will be maintained or whether any form of limitation will, in fact, be instituted. In the case of an effective limitation being imposed, it would make but little difference to the effectiveness of an embargo imposed by states members of the Co-ordination Committee whether that limitation took the form of an absolute embargo or the reduction of exports to the normal level of the United States exports prior to 1935.

On the question of substitutes, the committee came to the conclusion that they would be of little help to Italy for mitigating the severity of an embargo on petroleum and its derivatives, but at the same time they recommended that, if an embargo were placed on petroleum and petroleum products, it should be extended to cover industrial alcohol and benzol. In regard to transport, the committee estimated that, if Italy's supplies of oil had to be drawn from ports in the Gulf of Mexico, the Italian tanker fleet might be expected to carry not less than one half of the amount that Italy had consumed in 1935, and that, for carrying the other half, Italy would require rather more than 225,000 tons of foreign shipping. This was considerably less than the combined tonnage of the German and American tanker fleets; and, 'if tankers forming part of these two fleets were to be diverted to the Italian trade, there would be nothing, so far as the committee' was aware,

to prevent the owners of such vessels from replacing the tonnage so diverted by tankers chartered from other states members of the Co-

ordination Committee. Tankers of these other states now engaged in the carriage of oil to Italy would become available for this purpose. . . . For an embargo on transport of oil to Italy to be effective, measures of control would, therefore, require to be taken by countries not members of the League of Nations. On the other hand, even without such measures of control, the carriage of oil to Italy would be rendered more difficult and more expensive were an embargo on transports by member states to be imposed.

In the committee's opinion, the most practicable form for such an embargo

would be one which combined (a) a prohibition against the sale of tankers to states not applying the embargo, and (b), notwithstanding the special legal difficulties which might arise in certain cases in connexion with tankers already chartered, a prohibition against the proceeding of tankers to Italy.

The committee summarized its findings under the following seven heads:

(1) The figures given above with reference to consumption, to stocks and to supplies which might be *en route* at the moment of the imposition of an embargo on the export of petroleum and petroleum products make it possible to estimate roughly the period which would have to elapse before such an embargo, were it to be universally applied, would become fully effective. In the conditions prevailing at the moment of its session, the committee is of opinion that this period may be taken to be about three to three and a half months.

(2) In the event of such an embargo being applied by all states members of the Co-ordination Committee, it would be effective if the United States of America was to limit its exports to Italy to the normal level of its exports prior to 1935.

(3) If such an embargo were applied by the states members of the Co-ordination Committee alone, the only effect which it could have on Italy would be to render the purchase of petroleum more difficult and expensive.

(4) In view of the possibility of substitutes being used to some extent for petrol (motor spirit), an embargo on the export of petroleum and petroleum products would be strengthened were it extended to cover industrial alcohol and benzol.

(5) The effectiveness of an embargo imposed by states members of the Co-ordination Committee on the transport of oil to Italy is subject to the same limitations as an embargo on exports. Were these states alone to prohibit the use of tankers for the transport of oil to Italy, it would be able to satisfy its needs up to about 50 per cent. from its own resources, and the rest by means of vessels of other states, but with greater difficulty and at greater expense.

(6) If an embargo on transport should be decided on, the committee is of the opinion that the most practicable form of embargo would be one which would prohibit tankers from proceeding to Italy and would also prohibit the sale of tankers to states not applying the embargo.

(7) Should it be decided to impose an embargo on petroleum, attention should be given to the necessity of taking suitable measures to prevent traffic by indirect routes, including use of free ports, which is of special importance as regards petroleum.

It will be seen that the imposition of an oil sanction on the lines suggested by the committee would have been onerous for states members of the League which possessed tanker fleets—particularly for Norway—as well as for the producing states named in a passage of the report above quoted. It will also be seen that, for such a sanction to be effective, it was essential that the United States should assert its neutrality by the act of restricting its export of oil to Italy to the 'normal' level (that is, to the level as it stood before Italy began to increase her imports of oil for the purposes of her projected war in East Africa). At the same time, it is to be noted that on the 12th February, 1936, when this report was presented at Geneva, the Congress at Washington had not yet finally settled the terms of the new neutrality legislation which had to be brought into operation by the end of the month.<sup>1</sup> And it is also to be noted that, if the recommendations in the report had been adopted and put into execution forthwith by the sanction-taking states, and if the United States had then proceeded, before the end of the month, to restrict its oil exports to Italy to the 'normal' level, then 'the three to three and a half months' which, in the committee's opinion, 'would have to elapse before such an embargo, were it to be universally applied, would become fully effective,' would barely have given the Italians the time to complete the overthrow of the Abyssinian armies—seeing that, with all the oil supplies of the world to draw upon, without restriction, to the end, the Italians actually did not succeed in overcoming the Abyssinian resistance until after the beginning of May. *A fortiori*, the findings of the report indicate that the oil sanction would have effectively frustrated Italy's attempt to conquer Abyssinia if it had been imposed, as had been hoped, before the end of November 1935—that is, more than five months before the Italians actually succeeded in bringing the war to an end without this handicap, and at a moment when the prospect of parallel action, of the necessary extent, on the part of the United States, had been much more promising than it was in February 1936, when the policy of the United States was being affected by the highly unfavourable impression which the Laval-Hoare Plan had made upon American public opinion.

It will be seen how deadly a blow Monsieur Laval had dealt to

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 247-8, above.

the League, and how shrewd a stroke he had struck on Signor Mussolini's behalf, in twice averting the imposition of the oil sanction: the first time at the end of November<sup>1</sup> and the second time on the 7th-8th December, 1935. After the publication of the report of the 12th February, 1936, another French stiletto-thrust was needed in order to give the oil sanction—and with it the existence of Abyssinia and the efficacy of the Covenant—the *coup de grâce*; and this stroke was duly struck by the hand of Monsieur Flandin, who had succeeded Monsieur Laval as Minister for Foreign Affairs, in Paris on the 24th January, 1936.

Already, after the Committee of Eighteen's decision of the 22nd January to study the question of an oil sanction, and before the presentation on the 12th February of the Committee of Experts' report, the mere re-emergence of the possibility of an oil sanction had been sufficient to produce once more, in Italy, those symptoms of anxiety and gestures of ferocity which were now familiar because they had been evoked on each previous occasion on which the prospect for an oil sanction had come to the front.

One such sign of the times was an article, said to be from the pen of Signor Mussolini himself, which was published in the *Popolo d'Italia* of the 1st February.

Europe is sliding down the ever more steeply inclined plane of sanctions, at the bottom of which lies, ineluctably, war. . . .

At a certain moment, the embargo will end in a blockade; and the blockade will mean war—no longer a limited operation of colonial security, but a war of extermination in Europe: war on the Alps and on the various European rivers. . . .

It will be the students of Paris, Brussels and the other great European cities who, together with the country people, will have to march into the burning fiery furnace. . . .

If sanctions are extended, if there is a march towards war, the youth of Europe ought to know, straight away, on whose shoulders the terrible responsibility will lie, and accordingly we propose to sound the alarm, and to address an appeal, to the student youth of Europe. . . .

The students of Europe ought to bind themselves into a spiritual unity over the politicians' heads.

This was an open appeal to that small but noisy and demonstrative Fascist-minded minority of the student body of the University of Paris who had been making it impossible for Professor Jéze, the able and courageous advocate of Abyssinia at Geneva, to deliver his university lectures. Thereafter, on the 5th February, the Fascist Grand Council passed a resolution declaring that it recognized

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 277-8, above.



in foreign trade 'a function of public interest which justifies a direct control on the part of the Corporative State'. In the House of Commons at Westminster on the 24th February there was a debate in which the Labour and Liberal Opposition called, once more, for the application of the oil sanction and accused the Government of vacillation—a charge to which Mr. Eden and Lord Cranborne made rather colourless replies. These were the circumstances in which the Committee of Eighteen reassembled on the 2nd March to consider the report which its Committee of Experts had presented to it nearly three weeks back. It was now too late for the Committee of Eighteen's action to influence that of the Congress at Washington, whose new Neutrality Act had become law on the 29th February.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, Signor Mussolini felt the situation to be so serious for Italy as to call for the exertion of fresh pressure upon the French Foreign Minister, in the hope—which was not disappointed—that Monsieur Flandin would transmit this pressure to Mr. Eden, as Monsieur Laval, some three months earlier, had reacted upon Sir Samuel Hoare.

At Geneva on the 2nd March, which was the very day on which the Committee of Eighteen was to meet, Signor Bova Scoppa, the head of the permanent Italian delegation to the League, conveyed to Monsieur Flandin verbally a twofold, and perhaps threefold, threat from Signor Mussolini of steps—all highly disagreeable to France—which the head of the Italian state proposed to take in the event of the oil sanction being imposed. It seems certain that Signor Mussolini threatened Monsieur Flandin,<sup>2</sup> in that event, with the withdrawal of Italy from the League of Nations and with the denunciation by Italy of the military agreement which had been a corollary of the Franco-Italian Pact of the 7th January, 1935<sup>3</sup>—a denunciation which was to be followed, on the Italian side, by a re-manning of the Italo-French frontier from which the former French garrisons had been withdrawn, on the strength of the Franco-Italian military agreement, in order to reinforce their comrades on the frontier between France and Germany. It was also reported (though this not without contradiction) that Signor Mussolini had threatened in the third place to abandon for the future any Italian participation in the execution of the Pact of Locarno. Whatever the number and the nature of the threats may have been,

<sup>1</sup> See p. 248, above.

<sup>2</sup> The threats were addressed to Monsieur Flandin alone, and this unofficially. No communication in the same sense had been received by the British Government, according to a statement made on the 9th March, 1936, by Lord Cranborne in the House of Commons at Westminster in answer to a parliamentary question.

<sup>3</sup> See the *Survey for 1935*, vol. i, Part I, section (v).

there is no doubt that they sufficed for their purpose. Their efficacy as a stimulus may be gauged from the energy of Monsieur Flandin's obstructive action on the Committee of Eighteen on the very day on which Signor Mussolini's unwelcome message had been brought by Signor Bova Scoppa to the French Foreign Minister's ears.

On the morning of the 2nd March at Geneva, the meeting between Signor Bova Scoppa and Monsieur Flandin was followed by one between Monsieur Flandin and Mr. Eden, in which the French Foreign Minister learnt that his British colleague had been instructed by the Cabinet in Downing Street to propose that the existing sanctions should be tightened up and that the oil sanction should be imposed in addition. Monsieur Flandin thereupon asked Mr. Eden to agree to a further postponement of the oil sanction pending yet another attempt to mediate between the two belligerents; and Mr. Eden appears to have asked and obtained over the telephone Mr. Baldwin's consent to his falling in with Monsieur Flandin's wishes. For an observer from outside, Mr. Eden's pliancy on this occasion is not easy to understand, for there can be no doubt that his personal desire was that the oil sanction should be imposed; he had behind him, now, his own colleagues in the Government of the United Kingdom and also, as far as could be judged, a preponderance of British public opinion; and, apart from the French delegation, he could count upon receiving support from a majority of the states represented on the Committee of Eighteen and perhaps from a majority of all those represented on the Co-ordination Committee. In the course of the day he was to receive positive assurances of support from the representatives of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Rumania and Turkey; and, in the opinion of an able French journalist,<sup>1</sup> almost all states members, with the exception of Austria, Hungary, Switzerland and Venezuela, would have voted for the oil sanction on this occasion. The readiness of Mr. Eden's compliance with Monsieur Flandin's wishes in these circumstances was perhaps partly due to a misapprehension of Monsieur Flandin's intentions. Mr. Eden appears to have been under the impression that Monsieur Flandin had a concrete peace proposal to make, and that Italy was only to be granted a brief delay—no longer than forty-eight hours—for giving a favourable response, failing which the oil sanction would

<sup>1</sup> Mme Tabouis in *L'Œuvre*, 3rd March, 1936. The account, here given, of the dealings between MM. Bova Scoppa, Flandin and Eden is mainly based upon a despatch from her which was published in *L'Œuvre* of that date.

be imposed immediately without any further demur on Monsieur Flandin's part.

In any case, at the meeting of the Committee of Eighteen on the afternoon of the 2nd March, Monsieur Flandin anticipated the chairman, Senhor de Vasconcellos, when he was on the point of bringing up the question of the oil sanction, by proposing that, before the Committee of Eighteen proceeded any further with its work, the Committee of Thirteen should be asked to meet again—and this next day—to see whether it could make a fresh appeal to the belligerents to put an end to the war. Thereupon, Mr. Eden declared his willingness to fall in with Monsieur Flandin's proposal, on the ground that 'this procedure need not cause any undue delay', seeing that the Committee of Eighteen had still some work to do in connexion with improving the existing sanctions. It was only in the form of an afterthought to this acquiescence in a further delay that Mr Eden launched his proposal for an oil sanction in the following terms:

I think it only fair to the committee to make plain to them what is the view of His Majesty's Government upon the experts' report on the oil embargo His Majesty's Government are prepared to accept any decision to which this committee may come, but I must make it clear that, having considered the findings of the experts' report, His Majesty's Government are in favour of the imposition of an oil embargo by the members of the League and are prepared to join in the early application of such a sanction if the other principal supplying and transporting states who are members of the League of Nations are prepared to do likewise.

This contingent proposal which Mr. Eden thus laid before the Committee of Eighteen on the 2nd March was destined to have a far slighter effect upon the course of events than the resolution which was duly voted by the Committee of Thirteen on the 3rd:

The Committee of Thirteen, acting in virtue of the mandate given to it by the Council in its resolution of the 19th December, addresses to both belligerents an urgent appeal for the immediate opening of negotiations within the framework of the League of Nations and in the spirit of the Covenant with a view to the prompt cessation of hostilities and the definite restoration of peace. The Committee of Thirteen will meet on the 10th March to hear the replies of the two Governments.

Messages conveying this appeal were at once despatched to Addis Ababa and to Rome; but it will be noticed that the appeal contained no concrete suggestions for a settlement and mentioned no time-limit. These omissions were the monuments of French victories and British defeats in a battle, over the drafting of the resolution, which had been fought behind the scenes earlier in the day. Mr. Eden had

apparently pressed for the insertion of a time-limit of at any rate seventy-two hours, if not forty-eight; and he had also pressed—but likewise in vain—for making the cessation of hostilities a condition which was to take effect upon acceptance of the appeal, instead of allowing it to be included among the subjects for subsequent negotiation. On the 2nd–3rd March, 1936, as on the 7th–8th December, 1935, the British Foreign Secretary was out-manceuvred and overborne by a French antagonist in the guise of a colleague.

Monsieur Flandin's victory over Mr. Eden was less sensational than Monsieur Laval's over Sir Samuel Hoare; but the consequences of this second diplomatic battle were perhaps not less important. On the 3rd March itself Signor Gayda, in the *Giornale d'Italia*, chanted a paean of triumph over the French defeat of the British attempt to present Italy with an ultimatum. On the same day Signor Mussolini, in an address to his Cabinet which was afterwards published, rejoiced over the terms of the American Neutrality Act of the 29th February. And Monsieur Flandin found time to ask the British Government for an assurance that they would fulfil their Locarno obligations immediately—even if Italy were to repudiate hers—in the event of a German breach of the Locarno Pact, before the French hypothesis was transformed into a European fact by Germany's military reoccupation of the demilitarized zone of German territory in the Rhineland on the 7th March.

Thus, in averting the imposition of the oil sanction on the 2nd March, Monsieur Flandin had achieved far more for Italy than the French Foreign Minister's Italian beneficiaries could have dared to hope. He had postponed the application of this sanction not merely until the 10th March, 1936, but until the Greek Kalends. An affirmative reply to the Committee of Thirteen's appeal of the 3rd March was received from the Emperor of Ethiopia, in a preliminary communication, as early as the 5th, and on the 8th Signor Mussolini signified his acceptance in principle. The Committee of Thirteen, however, reassembled not, as prescribed, on the 10th, but on the 23rd; and by that date the international situation had been transformed in ways wholly favourable to Italy and utterly disastrous for Abyssinia.

In fact, on the 7th March, 1936, Herr Hitler had unintentionally, but none the less effectively, put the finishing touch to the work which had been done by Monsieur Flandin on the 2nd–3rd March, 1936, and by Monsieur Laval, before him, in November and December 1935. The attention of the French and British Governments, which, through all the previous phases of the Italo-Abyssinian conflict,

had never ceased to be half absorbed by a haunting fear of German action in Europe, was now wholly engrossed in a new and more poignant preoccupation with Germany—and this at the very moment when in Africa Italy was on the verge of military victory and Abyssinia was in direst extremity. More than ever, the desire to restore the Stresa Front<sup>1</sup> overbore in most French, and in some British, minds the desire to vindicate the Covenant of the League and to defend a fellow state member against an act of aggression in Africa. In the French view, which was short and personal, the Italian offence of attacking an unoffending neighbour in violation of the Covenant and of all Italy's other treaty engagements, and then waging this unjust war by methods of barbarism which Italy had pledged herself to eschew, counted for nothing by comparison with the heinousness of the German offence of militarily reoccupying German-owned and German-administered territory in violation of treaties but without the taking of a single life or the dropping of a single explosive or incendiary bomb or poison-gas container. And this obliquity of moral vision was attested, for the information of Posterity, by the proposal—which was officially put forward, in all seriousness, as a result of the consultations between the Locarno Powers other than Germany—that the majesty of an offended law of nations should be vindicated by the posting, during an interim period, of Italian troops, cheek by jowl with British comrades-in-arms, to keep the peace along the Franco-German and Belgo-German border.<sup>2</sup> When such a proposal as this could issue from the counsels of those Powers on whom the vindication of the Covenant against Italy principally depended, it had become manifest that Signor Mussolini had little now to fear from the League.

He had the less to fear because the measure of Anglo-French agreement on the Rhenish question which was represented by this preposterous proposal was infinitesimal; for, while it was true that opinion in Great Britain had been affected in the same way as opinion in France by Herr Hitler's *coup* of the 7th March, the British reaction was so very much milder than the French that the net result was greatly to widen the gulf between the British and the French position. On the 12th April, 1936, when the width of this gulf was now apparent, the situation was trenchantly described in the following passage of an article in *Le Temps*:

Great Britain, who is so anxious not to ratify the *fait accompli* in Ethiopia, seems to be resigning herself to that course in the Rhineland.

<sup>1</sup> See the *Survey for 1935*, vol. i, Part I, section (vi).

<sup>2</sup> This proposal will be dealt with in the *Survey for 1936*.

Last December Sir Samuel Hoare consented to sign with Monsieur Laval their notorious agreement because he already foresaw what was going to happen in Germany, and he therefore wished to obtain a rapid settlement of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict, even at the price of doing violence to principles. To-day the position has been inverted: Mr. Eden seems disposed to offer up the same principles as a sacrifice to Germany in order to be the freer to turn towards—or against—Italy.

This is the crux of the misunderstanding: for the British Government, the great question of the moment is that of Ethiopia, for the French Government, it is the question with which we have been confronted by the Reich. The British Government maintains that the initiative taken by the Italians on the 3rd October, 1935, is more serious than the initiative taken by the Germans on the 7th March, 1936. The French Government considers—and, in our view, it is right—that Germany's gesture has shaken the very foundations of the European order and that it is therefore big with possible consequences which are much more perilous to the cause of peace than an African expedition, however cruel. It is this divergence of views that is at the bottom of the present confusion.

While African questions were being ousted from the minds of most European statesmen and diplomatists, outside Italy, by Herr Hitler's *coup* of the 7th March, 1936, the British Government found time to address written communications to the Italian Government, on the 7th, 9th and 10th March, with regard to the bombing of a British Red Cross ambulance on Abyssinian territory by Italian airmen on the 3rd, 4th and 5th of that month.<sup>1</sup> The resulting correspondence was pursued until the 10th April.<sup>2</sup> The Secretariat of the League of Nations also received a protest on the same subject from the Abyssinian Government on the 7th March, and an apologia from the Italian Government on the 17th March.

On the 17th March, likewise, the Abyssinian Government published a *démenti* of rumours that they were engaged in direct peace negotiations with the Italian Government; and on the 20th and the 21st the Abyssinian Minister in Paris addressed two letters to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations at Geneva. The second letter accused Italy of sprinkling poison gas upon Ethiopian civilians as well as combatants, and called upon states members to take effective steps for putting a stop to these Italian atrocities. The first letter pointed out that the Italian Government, in their reply of the 8th March to the Committee of Thirteen's appeal of the 3rd, had not declared in terms that they undertook to negotiate, as the committee had stipulated, 'within the framework of the League of Nations and in the spirit of the Covenant'. The Abyssinian Govern-

<sup>1</sup> See p. 412, below.

<sup>2</sup> Text of documents in British White Paper *Omd.* 5160 of 1936.

ment gave notice that their own acceptance of the appeal was conditional upon the fulfilment of these two stipulations (which had been laid down, not by the Abyssinian Government, but by the Committee of Thirteen itself). They went on to remind the League that, 'for fifteen months past', Abyssinia had 'made pressing appeals for the League's intervention and that, up to the present, no effective solution' had 'been given to the Ethiopian demands'. They proceeded to quote, with application to their own cause against Italy, words which had been used as recently as the 14th March at a meeting of the Council by the French and Belgian delegates in maintaining their cause against Germany. Finally, the Abyssinian Government put to the League the demand that 'the assistance promised in Article 16 of the Covenant' should be given to Abyssinia 'without delay and with all the necessary effectiveness'. These were the circumstances in which the Committee of Thirteen reassembled at last on the 23rd March—this time in London.

At this meeting the committee did not discuss the question of sanctions at all; and though it did consider the Abyssinian request that Italy should be asked to give assurances of her acceptance of the two stipulations attaching to the committee's appeal of the 3rd, the committee now rejected this request as inopportune. The sole outcome of a two-hours-long discussion in private was the following resolution:

The Committee of Thirteen takes note of the replies given by the two parties to the dispute to the appeal addressed to them on the 3rd March. It requests its chairman, assisted by the Secretary-General, to get into touch with the two parties and to take such steps as may be called for in order that the committee may be able, as soon as possible, to bring the two parties together and, within the framework of the League of Nations and in the spirit of the Covenant, to bring about a prompt cessation of hostilities and the final restoration of peace.

This fresh act of procrastination in London presented a melancholy contrast to a fighting speech on the subject of sanctions which was delivered in Rome by Signor Mussolini on the same day. The economic siege of Italy, said the head of the Italian state on the 23rd March, had been undertaken by fifty-two states, but one state alone had desired it and imposed it. Signor Mussolini's retort to League sanctions was a declaration of Italian *autarkeia*.

The task which MM. Flandin and Eden had thrust upon Señor de Madariaga, the chairman of the Committee of Thirteen, was as arduous as it was invidious. Señor de Madariaga's first communication to Rome, which was despatched from London on the 23rd March

itself, was on the delicate subject of the Abyssinian complaints of Italian atrocities. A first rebuff was administered to the mediator, before Señor de Madariaga left London, by Signor Grandi, who declined an invitation to meet the Ethiopian Minister to the Court of St. James's in Señor de Madariaga's presence. Thereafter, an invitation addressed on the 27th March by Señor de Madariaga to the Government at Rome to send a delegate to meet him at Geneva to discuss the possibilities of a peace settlement was parried by the Italian Government on the 2nd April, within twenty-four hours of its reception, with a counter-invitation, couched in perhaps ironically polite language, for a visit by Señor de Madariaga to Rome 'in order that a first exchange of views of a general character might take place' in that city between the chairman of the Committee of Thirteen and the head of the Italian state. It was only after this that Signor Suvich answered Señor de Madariaga's letter of the 23rd March in a communication of the 3rd April—notably stiffer in tone than that of the 2nd April—in which he challenged the competence of the Committee of Thirteen to concern itself with questions of atrocities, and at the same time inquired whether the committee had drawn the Abyssinian Government's attention to the Italian Government's charges of this nature, as it had drawn the Italian Government's attention to the Abyssinian indictment. A few days later it was reported that the French Ambassador to the Quirinal, Monsieur de Chambrun, had brought from Rome to Paris a statement of the conditions on which Italy would be willing still to honour the obligations which she had taken upon herself in the Locarno Pact. According to this report, Signor Mussolini was demanding, in return, an immediate repeal of all sanctions; a recantation of the finding that Italy had broken the League Covenant by committing an act of aggression; and an acquiescence in a direct settlement between the Italian and the Abyssinian Governments, with the League's participation.

Meanwhile, the Ethiopian delegate to the League had informed Señor de Madariaga that he remained at his disposition, but had reserved his reply to the Committee of Thirteen's appeal of the 3rd March pending the receipt of an assurance that the Italian Government intended to enter into the proposed negotiations within the framework of the League and in the spirit of the Covenant, as the Committee of Thirteen themselves had originally stipulated. On the 1st April Monsieur Wolde Mariam communicated to the Secretary-General a declaration from the Abyssinian Government insisting upon this point and suggesting that the Italian 'acceptance in



principle' of the appeal from the Committee of Thirteen had been nothing but a manœuvre to prevent the imposition of the oil sanction by the Committee of Eighteen. 'By its words and its acts', the Abyssinian Government maintained, the Italian Government was making it plain that it had 'no intention of ceasing hostilities and definitively re-establishing peace' on the conditions stipulated.

Ethiopia [the declaration went on] feels the greatest bitterness at having to take note that financial assistance has not yet been granted to her, that Article 16 has not been strictly applied; and that, over and above this, the Italian Government has succeeded in obtaining an adjournment of the application of an oil sanction voted five months ago, and flatters itself that it is going to obtain the suppression of all sanctions whatever by an unholy bargain. Is this the spirit of the Covenant?

After quoting some telling passages from a speech, delivered by Monsieur Flandin on the 29th March, which were at least as pertinent to Abyssinia's case against Italy as they were to France's case against Germany, the Ethiopian Government put forward the following precise demands:

(1) That the Ethiopian Government should now be given financial assistance which would enable it to carry on its struggle against the aggressor on less unequal terms than at present;

(2) That all the obstacles and hindrances which were still being placed by certain states members in the way of the transport of arms consigned to the Ethiopian forces should now be removed;

(3) That the sanctions which were obligatory under Article 16 of the Covenant should now be reinforced and completed;

(4) That rapid steps should be taken to make the Government at Rome respect the laws of war and the international conventions, and to put a stop to the systematic destruction and extermination of innocent populations.

On the 6th April, after his defeat by Marshal Badoglio in the Battle of Lake Ashangi,<sup>1</sup> the Emperor Haile Selassie launched unofficially, through the correspondents of several British newspapers in Abyssinia, a desperate plea for the aid which he had a right to expect. On the same day, in the House of Commons at Westminster, Mr. Eden stood uneasily on the defensive against a host of critics. The British Government did, however, succeed in getting the Committee of Thirteen convened for the 8th April. On the 7th 'A Supreme Appeal to all the Organs and all the Members of the League of Nations' from the Emperor of Ethiopia was received by the Secretary-General of the League:

Does collective security consist only in making platonic protests against the aggressor and in addressing words of compassion to his victim?

<sup>1</sup> See p. 397, below.

At Rome on the 8th April—the day on which, at Geneva, the meeting of the Committee of Thirteen was taking place—Signor Mussolini declared to his Cabinet that the security of the Italian colonies would 'be fully attained through the complete annihilation of the Abyssinian military formations—an annihilation which' could 'neither be averted nor be delayed'.

In the Committee of Thirteen, on the same day, Mr. Eden spoke strongly both on the procrastination of the League and on the employment of poison gas by the Italians,<sup>1</sup> while Monsieur Flandin echoed the Italian denial of the competence of the Committee of Thirteen to deal with this matter, and insisted that in any case the Italian charges against the Abyssinians must be placed on the same footing as the Abyssinian charges against the Italians. The Committee of Thirteen then appointed a committee of jurists to examine the conventions which the Abyssinians and Italians declared to have been violated; to consider the measures which states members of the League might be called upon to take for the punishment of such violation; and to ascertain what was the competent organ for deciding this question. On the same day the Committee of Thirteen also addressed an urgent request to the International Red Cross at Geneva to communicate any information which it possessed in regard to the two belligerents' mutual accusations.

On the 9th the Committee of Thirteen received from the International Red Cross a refusal of their request, on the ground that the International Red Cross was debarred by its neutrality from communicating to any other body any information which it had received either from its own delegates or from other parties. On the same day the committee of jurists reported that there was no provision, in the conventions in question, for any action in the event of their being violated, but that the Council of the League of Nations was

<sup>1</sup> A British memorandum entitled 'Alleged Italian Use of Poison Gas: Note communicated by the United Kingdom Delegation' was circulated on the 8th April to the Committee of Thirteen. During the past few weeks, British opinion had been displaying great uneasiness at the reports of the Italian use of poison gas (particularly of mustard gas), which were attested by foreign observers whose ability to verify the facts could not reasonably be doubted. A debate in the House of Lords at Westminster on the 30th March, 1936, on a question put by Lord Cecil, and a series of questions in the House of Commons, as well as correspondence published in the press, showed that, while there was great reluctance to believe the allegations against Italy without full official confirmation, there was also a realization that to condone Italy's breach of the 1925 protocol prohibiting chemical warfare was not only to share to some extent in her guilt but also to increase the risk that the same methods might be applied in future on occasions which might be of more direct personal interest to the Governments and peoples of European states.

competent to deal with any violations of any treaties, and could delegate its power to such of its organs as it might think fit. A further legal inquiry into the question whether the Committee of Thirteen came within this category was averted by the intervention of Mr. Eden, who drew attention to the fact that the records of the Suez Canal Company showed that large quantities of poison gas had, as a matter of fact, been sent from Italy to the Italian army in East Africa.<sup>1</sup> Eventually the committee addressed 'a pressing appeal to both [*sic*] belligerents to take all necessary measures for preventing any breaches of the international conventions and of the principles of the law of nations'—but even this appeal was delivered by the committee, not as one speaking with authority, but as 'an interpreter of the emotion aroused in public opinion' by the Italian and Abyssinian recriminations. The committee begged both parties for 'assurances susceptible of making this emotion disappear'. The Abyssinian Government gave, on the 10th April, the assurance asked for, while protesting against the unwillingness of the committee to discriminate in this matter between the two parties. The Italian Government replied on the 11th in a telegram taking note of the fact that their own accusations against the Abyssinians were being taken up by the League. In regard to the Abyssinian accusations against Italy, the telegram from Rome simply asserted that 'a respect for the laws of war has been, and is, the constant rule of the Italian Army'.

Meanwhile, in the matter of the proposed peace negotiations, the Committee of Thirteen had decided on the 8th that Señor de Madariaga should not accept the Italian invitation to visit Rome. On the afternoon of the 9th Baron Aloisi arrived in Geneva and Señor de Madariaga had an interview with him there. Baron Aloisi declared that he had come solely to take part in the discussions between the Locarno Powers, and that he had no instructions about the Italo-Abyssinian conflict. He complained of the fact that the Italian invitation to Señor de Madariaga had not yet been acknowledged; but at the same time he told Señor de Madariaga that the Italian Government would be prepared to send a representative to Geneva after Easter, though they would prefer the alternative which they themselves had suggested.

At a meeting of the Committee of Thirteen on the 10th, when the sense of this conversation with Baron Aloisi was reported by Señor de Madariaga, there was another battle between Mr. Eden and Monsieur Flandin. Mr. Eden proposed that the Italian Government's

<sup>1</sup> The amount declared, in transit, by the Italian authorities down to the end of February 1936 appears to have been 259 tons.

offer to send a delegate to Geneva should be accepted; that Italo-Abyssinian conversations should begin at Geneva as soon as the Italian delegate arrived; that Señor de Madariaga and Monsieur Avenol should be present at these conversations; and that the Committee of Thirteen should remain in session, so long as the conversations continued, in order to keep in touch and be ready to take action. On the other side, Monsieur Flandin proposed that the Committee of Thirteen should adjourn while the conversations were taking place; that discretion should be given to Señor de Madariaga to reconvene the committee when he thought fit; and that it should be laid down that Señor de Madariaga and Monsieur Avenol were to be present at the Italo-Abyssinian negotiations as mere observers and not as participants. Finally it was agreed to adjourn the Committee of Thirteen until the following Thursday, the 16th April, and to leave the rôle of MM. Avenol and de Madariaga undefined.

On the 12th April the Secretary-General of the League received another telegram from the Emperor Haile Selassie once more protesting against the League's delays and against Italy's atrocities. Meanwhile, pending the arrival of the Italian delegate, Señor de Madariaga and Monsieur Avenol had a further interview with the Ethiopian delegation, at which the latter once more refused to enter into direct negotiations with the Italian Government and demanded that Italy's war aims should be unmasked and the Covenant implemented. On the 14th April the Empress of Abyssinia broadcast, from Addis Ababa, an appeal to the World to come to the rescue of her country in its desperate struggle against an aggressor who was waging his unjust war by methods of barbarism.

On the 15th April Baron Aloisi reappeared at Geneva—this time with power to talk about the Italo-Abyssinian conflict to Señor de Madariaga. What the chairman of the Committee of Thirteen heard from the Italian delegate at a meeting between them on that day was reported in the following terms by the League Secretariat:

1. With reference to the Italian Government's telegram of the 8th March, 1936, the Italian delegation informs the chairman of the Committee of Thirteen that its Government definitively agrees to the immediate opening of negotiations with a view to the cessation of hostilities. The cessation may be the outcome of the signature either of an armistice or of preliminaries of peace. An armistice could only be negotiated between military commanders. Inasmuch as its main object would be to ensure the safety of the armies during the suspension, the guarantee that would be demanded would doubtless exceed the scope of the demands in connexion with preliminaries of peace. Moreover, the

negotiation of an armistice might take as long as that of preliminaries of peace.

Being anxious to emphasize the Italian Government's desire to respond as effectively as possible to the invitation of the Committee of Thirteen, the Italian delegation accordingly pronounces in favour of the immediate opening of negotiations for preliminaries of peace.

II. The Italian delegation feels bound to point out that such negotiations could not be based on any situation other than the actual situation as it presents itself after six months of military operations. In taking its stand on the ground of conciliation, the Committee of Thirteen no doubt agrees that there is a *de facto* situation.

The Italian delegation does not ask the Committee of Thirteen to recognize that situation, but merely not to ignore it.

III. For these reasons the Italian delegation considers that the only method suited to that situation is the method of direct negotiations. It is prepared to consider any means of enabling the Committee of Thirteen to be kept informed of the negotiations.

It would suggest that the venue of the negotiations should be fixed at Ouchy.

IV. The Italian delegation takes this opportunity to express its hope that the outcome of these negotiations will be such as to enable the Italian Government to resume active participation with the League of Nations in consonance with the general situation.

These Italian proposals were communicated to the Ethiopian delegation and were rejected by it on the strength of the terms in which the Committee of Thirteen had framed its appeal of the 3rd March.

In demanding that the Ethiopian people should be abandoned to the aggressor [the Ethiopian delegation declared] the Italian Government was in reality doing nothing less than fixing its price for a deal. Italy would sell her support in a European dispute in return for the raising of sanctions and for the abandonment of the League's concern with Italy's act of aggression [in Africa].

The Ethiopian delegation asked the Committee of Thirteen to certify that the Italian Government had not agreed to negotiate within the framework of the League of Nations and in the spirit of the Covenant. It also urged that the moment had now come for applying against the aggressor all the sanctions contemplated in Article 16 of the Covenant, and for thereby fulfilling the obligation, which the states members of the League had taken on themselves, of coming to the aid of a victim of aggression both immediately and effectively. This Abyssinian reply was afterwards embodied in a written communication which was presented to Señor de Madariaga on the 16th. In the course of that day, at Señor de Madariaga's instance, the Italian delegation modified its terms to the point of declaring that it was 'ready to examine every means that might

give the Committee of Thirteen the opportunity of being informed about the direct negotiations [between the two belligerent Governments]'; but when—in accordance with a decision of the Committee of Thirteen at a meeting held that afternoon—this concession, such as it was, was communicated by Señor de Madariaga next morning to the Ethiopian delegation, the latter expressed the view that this was not a substantial modification of the original Italian proposals, and it announced that on this account it stood by its previous declaration. These were the circumstances in which the Committee of Thirteen reassembled on the afternoon of the 17th April. On this occasion Señor de Madariaga formally reported to the committee the failure of the mission with which the committee had charged him on the 23rd March; and, upon this, the Committee of Thirteen decided to make a report to the Council (a step which was equivalent to marking time, since the Council consisted of the members of the committee together with the two parties to the dispute). On the same day, the 17th April, another urgent appeal to the League was telegraphed from Addis Ababa by the Emperor. A report drafted by Señor de Madariaga was adopted by the Committee of Thirteen on the 18th April.<sup>1</sup>

The Council of the League could be summoned on this occasion without delay, since the session begun in London on the 14th March had been simply adjourned on the 24th<sup>2</sup> instead of being closed. Accordingly the session was resumed at Geneva on the 20th April; and, at a private sitting that morning, the first business transacted was to place the Italo-Abyssinian dispute upon the agenda which, so far, had been confined at this session to the single question of the situation relating to the Locarno treaties. At an immediately following public sitting Señor de Madariaga presented the report of the Committee of Thirteen, and Baron Aloisi and Monsieur Wolde Mariam then spoke in turn for the states which they respectively represented.

The Italian delegate opened his speech with the proposition 'that no Government' had 'ever given the League of Nations proofs of goodwill that could be compared with those given by the Italian

<sup>1</sup> The committee also instructed Señor de Madariaga to address a letter of protest to the International Red Cross in regard to their refusal to furnish information, and a letter of inquiry to the Italian Government in regard to their use of poison gas. Both letters were duly despatched on the 18th April. The International Red Cross sent a reply to Señor de Madariaga on the 24th.

<sup>2</sup> This League Council session of the 14th-24th March, 1936, in London will be dealt with in the *Survey for 1936* in connexion with the transactions arising out of the German military reoccupation of the Rhineland.

Government, which' had 'remained within the League even after the denial of justice of which Italy' had 'to complain'. He went on to argue that the Italian proposals which he had conveyed on the 15th April to Señor de Madariaga did not imply a rejection of the Committee of Thirteen's stipulations that the peace negotiations, for which it had appealed on the 3rd March, should be conducted 'within the framework of the League of Nations and in the spirit of the Covenant'. He insisted that any agreement—whether in the form of peace preliminaries or in the form of an armistice—for a suspension of hostilities must provide for an Italian military occupation of all the Abyssinian mobilization centres, including the capital and the points on the frontier through which arms were being imported—'that is to say, virtually the occupation of the whole enemy territory'. He asserted that Abyssinia, not Italy, had been responsible for the break-down of the conciliation procedure. He denied the competence of the Committee of Thirteen to inquire into Italian atrocities—and, in this connexion, he made an indirect avowal of the truth of the Abyssinian charge that the Italian army in Africa had been using poison gas in violation of the protocol of the 17th June, 1925. This protocol, Baron Aloisi declared,

contains no provision forbidding, in restriction of the validity of general principles, the exercise of the right of reprisals against atrocities such as those of which Italian soldiers have been victims—atrocities for which the documentary evidence has been brought to the knowledge of all the states members of the League of Nations.

Monsieur Wolde Mariam's speech took the form of a compact reminder of the diplomatic action which the Ethiopian delegation had taken up to date. It had asked the League to certify that the sole reason why the Italian Government had accepted 'in principle' the Committee of Thirteen's appeal had been to gain time; to postpone the application of the oil sanction and of all the other sanctions; and to try to do a deal, at Abyssinia's expense, over the sale of Italy's support to other European Powers in a European dispute. The Italian Government, Monsieur Wolde Mariam contended, had now made it clear that they had never had any intention of responding to the Committee of Thirteen's appeal *bona fide*. The Ethiopian Government demanded that the Council should draw the necessary conclusions from this fact, and that the League should apply the provisions of Article 16 of the Covenant in their entirety, in order to make it impossible for an aggressor to triumph.

In the next public sitting, which followed on the same afternoon, the delegates of all states members of the Council spoke, including

those of the two parties to the dispute who had already spoken that morning.

Baron Aloisi took objection to the Abyssinian insinuation that Italy was seeking to do a deal with her European neighbours for selling them her support in Europe at the price of their acquiescence in her aggression in Africa; but he immediately went on to state the Abyssinian proposition as his own in other words:

The [present] check to conciliation [in the Italo-Abyssinian conflict] is going to have the effect of also postponing Italian collaboration in the work of pacification in Europe. This European pacification will have to follow the settlement of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict; and that conflict ought never to have been allowed to pass beyond the bounds of its strictly colonial setting.

Mr. Eden, who spoke next, admitted and emphasized the gravity of the situation in which the League now found itself:

The confidence which members of the League of Nations will feel justified in placing in this organization in the future must in a large measure be influenced by its success or failure in the present instance.

He also declared, once again, the British Government's readiness, not only to maintain the existing sanctions, but to reinforce them:

At this solemn hour, when we must each of us be conscious of the gravity of our decision, Governments must be prepared to shoulder their responsibilities and clearly to state the policy which they are prepared to pursue. In the view of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, it is our manifest duty as members of the League at least to maintain those economic and financial sanctions in connexion with this dispute. In order, however, that there may be no shadow of doubt about the position of His Majesty's Government, I must make it clear that, in addition to the action under Article 16 which has already been taken, His Majesty's Government, as has previously been stated, are ready and willing to consider, together with their fellow members of the League, the imposition of any further economic and financial sanctions that may be considered necessary and effective for the fulfilment of the obligations which we all of us bear in this dispute.

The British delegate then went on to discuss the probable nemesis, for the inhabitants of Europe, of the sin of one European Power in using poison gas in Africa.

It is, in the judgment of His Majesty's Government, impossible not to take account of the evidence which exists and which goes to show that poison gas has been used by the Italian armies in their campaign against Abyssinians, themselves utterly unprovided with any means of defence against this method of warfare, which has been outlawed by the nations. Not only the two belligerents, but nearly all the nations of the World, are parties to the Gas Protocol of 1925. Is there one nation here, one



nation anywhere on the Earth's surface, which is not interested in its observance? This protocol concerns the inhabitants of every great city in the World. It is for them a charter against extermination. If a convention such as this can be torn up, will not our peoples, whether living in the thronged cities of Western Europe or in less densely-crowded areas elsewhere, ask, and ask with reason, what is the value of any international instrument to which our representatives put their names, how can we have confidence that our own folk, despite all solemnly signed protocols, will not be burned, blinded and done to death in agony hereafter? These are questions which every member of the Council must put to himself to-day.

Finally, Mr. Eden touched upon the questions with which states members would be faced if the League of Nations were to break down:

If as a consequence of the final outcome of this dispute the authority of the League were so shaken that its future utility as the best instrument for the preservation of international peace were placed in doubt, then we should each of us have to consider the policy which in that situation it would be our duty to pursue. This is not a prophecy but an anxiety.

Monsieur Paul-Boncour, who spoke next, made it clear—with an almost ostentatious cynicism—that whether or not Italy was anxious to do the deal which Abyssinia accused her of designing, France, for her part, was eager for a bargain with Italy on these iniquitous terms. In spite, Monsieur Paul-Boncour declared, of the check that had overtaken an attempt at conciliation which had been made at the instance of the French Government, this attempt must not be interrupted; 'it must continue until it arrives at its goal'—a sinister condition for a French statesman to lay down at a moment when the Italian armies were marching upon Addis Ababa, and when their objective had been declared by Signor Mussolini, as lately as the 8th April, to be 'the complete annihilation of the Abyssinian military formations',<sup>1</sup> while, in Monsieur Paul-Boncour's own presence in the Council Chamber that very morning, Baron Aloisi had declared that the Italian condition for ceasing fire was 'virtually the occupation of the whole enemy territory'.<sup>2</sup> Monsieur Paul-Boncour, however, did not attempt to conceal the fact that, under the pretext of conciliation, France was ready, without turning a hair, to hold the ring for an aggressor while he completed the destruction of his victim, so long as France thought that there was a chance of her being able to engage the aggressor thereafter, when his triumph had given him the leisure to turn his hand to other enterprises, as her own hired assassin for a performance in the European arena:

Passing divergences must not prevent us from finding ourselves united

<sup>1</sup> See p. 345, above.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 350, above.

again in face of the formidable eventualities that now weigh upon Europe as a result of certain events . . . We need peace in Ethiopia in order to address ourselves to the dangers with which Europe is threatened. We need a settlement of the position of a great country *vis-à-vis* the League of Nations, in order that this country may take part in the work of European construction, and I note with satisfaction that the representative of Italy has graciously drawn our attention, on this point, to the fact that this is also the desire of his own country.

Thus the representative of France avowed more frankly than the representative of Italy the 'deal' which the European states members of the League were being accused of making with one another at an African member's expense; and when Monsieur Paul-Boncour sat down there was a pause—before the President of the Council realized that this was actually all that the French delegate had to say. The Russian delegate, Monsieur Potemkin, who spoke next, took a larger view. He ascribed the ill-success of the League to 'the absence of the necessary certainty that all the members of the League of Nations' would 'show solidarity in an equal degree in face of every act of aggression.' He denounced the existence, 'in the very bosom of the League,' of 'a tendency to treat the aggressor with a tolerance, and even an indulgence, that actually increased in the same ratio as the aggressor's own arrogance and tenacity'. And he declared that the most dangerous thing of all was that this was happening just at the moment when there was 'an imperious necessity for a union of endeavours to avert the catastrophe with which Humanity' was 'threatened'.

Señor de Madariaga made the point—and the very stones of the Council Chamber would assuredly have cried out, if one Councillor had not avowed it at last—that

the situation with regard to the Covenant is inevitably abnormal. Whether or not this was what we wished, the efforts that we are making to achieve peace simultaneously with the logical development of the Covenant have landed us in a completely self-contradictory procedure. Several months ago we declared . . . that Italy's action in Ethiopia was contrary to the Covenant. At the same time, we are exerting ourselves to arrive at a settlement by conciliation. But, gentlemen, since the moment when we recognized, now several months ago, that there was an act of aggression and a victim of it, we can only work for conciliation in the somewhat illogical and difficult form of a conciliation between an aggressor and his victim.

Of the other speakers, Monsieur Borberg (Denmark) supported Mr. Eden in urging that the existing sanctions ought to be reinforced, and Mr. Bruce (Australia) and Señor Ruiz-Guiñazú (Argentina) in agreeing that they ought at any rate to be maintained as they were (though

the Argentinian delegate definitely declared himself against reinforcement). In his denunciation of the Italian use of poison gas, Mr. Eden also received support from Senhor de Vasconcellos (Portugal). On the other hand, Señor Garcia Oldini (Chile) and Señor Zaldumbide (Ecuador) supported Monsieur Paul-Boncour in insisting that the present 'check' to the League's efforts at conciliation ought not to be placed at Italy's door rather than at Abyssinia's, and that the conciliation procedure ought to be continued.

Thereafter the Council retired into private session to discuss the text of a resolution which had been drafted by Señor de Madariaga, which evoked an outburst of indignation from Monsieur Wolde Mariam :

When the Italian Government has hurled in the face of the League of Nations, and of the whole World, the defiance of Force against Right, will the Council be content to address a new supreme and platonic appeal to Italy for her collaboration in the maintenance of peace ? Is that the effective assistance to which the states members pledged themselves when they signed Article 16 of the Covenant ? Is that the execution of the promise made by the League of Nations to the victim of aggression in October 1935 ? Will the League bow before the *fait accompli* because this is the work of a powerful state and because the victim has no ally ? The Ethiopian delegation is convinced that the Council is on the way to creating a precedent which will be dangerous for the security and for the relations of the peoples [of the World], for the lasting maintenance of peace, and for the observance of international engagements.

After the President of the Council had gravely reproved the Ethiopian delegate for the diplomatic enormity of calling a spade a spade, the public sitting was resumed at 10 p.m., and the draft resolution, as amended in private, was now adopted in the following terms :

The Council takes note of the report of the Committee of Thirteen, approves of and renews the appeal addressed by the committee to the two parties for the prompt cessation of hostilities and the restoration of peace in the framework of the League of Nations and the spirit of the Covenant ;

Notes that on the 5th March the Ethiopian Government, in reply to this appeal, agreed to the opening of negotiations subject to the provisions of the Covenant being respected. It is noted that the Committee of Thirteen's proposal was made, and that the negotiations were to be conducted, in the spirit of the Covenant and in the framework of the League of Nations ;

Likewise notes that on the 8th March the Italian Government, in reply to this appeal, 'agreed in principle to the opening of negotiations concerning the settlement of the conflict' ;

Regrets that the information obtained by the chairman of the Committee of Thirteen and the Secretary-General of the League shows that

the efforts at conciliation made by the Committee of Thirteen in accordance with this appeal to the two parties have not succeeded,

Regrets that in these circumstances it has not been possible to bring about the cessation of hostilities, and that the war is continuing under conditions which had been declared to be contrary to the Covenant, and which involve execution of the obligations laid upon the members of the League in such a case by the Covenant;

Addresses to Italy a supreme appeal that, in view of present circumstances which call for the co-operation of all the nations, she should bring to the settlement of her dispute with Ethiopia that spirit which the League of Nations is entitled to expect from one of its original members and a permanent member of the Council,

Recalls that Italy and Ethiopia are bound by the protocol of the 17th June, 1925, on the use of asphyxiating, poisonous, and other gases, and by the convention regarding the conduct of war to which these two states are parties, and emphasizes the importance which has been attached to these instruments by all the contracting states.

Baron Aloisi voted against this resolution; the Ecuadorian delegate read out a statement declaring that his Government, while approving the resolution as a whole, dissociated themselves from the paragraph relating to sanctions; the Ethiopian delegate repeated in public what he had said in private a few minutes before. The Council then dispersed; and the interval of three weeks which elapsed before the next meeting on the 11th May gave the Italian armies in Africa the time which they needed in order to complete the execution of their programme of annihilating the Abyssinian armed forces and occupying the most important parts of the enemy territory—military operations which were being carried on in Africa with unremitting vigour during the weeks and months through which the so-called 'conciliation procedure' was being protracted in Europe.

The news of the Abyssinian military and political collapse which now came in thick and fast was punctuated by the death-cries of the Shoan Empire. An address, making a last appeal, was read to the foreign journalists in Addis Ababa on the 22nd April by the Emperor's daughter, Princess Tsahai, in the presence, and on behalf, of her mother the Empress; and in the same place, on the 27th, an appeal was made to the same audience by the princess herself:

For God's sake help us. Get something done that will really harm the Italian armies and not merely the Italian people. . . . Use your numbers and your power to organize mass meetings and prepare petitions in all parts of every country. Rally your husbands, brothers, sons, and force them to use their massed strength to force the Parliaments and rulers to take action.

Do I ask you purely selfishly to do this? No. We are only a small race; but I am seventeen and its leading daughter, and I know, as you

know, that if Maukind lets armies and gas destroy my country and people, Civilization will be destroyed too. We have common cause, you and I.

Why, therefore, do not all do something to drive off this common danger to Humanity, this agony, this death by bomb, shell, and gas, before it again establishes itself as it is doing here now, soon to spread fatally to your homes and your menfolk too? Italian aggression and gas have set Humanity a test. If you fail to help us now, we all shall die.

The Princess Tsahai had already sent a personal appeal to Monsieur Herriot in a telegram which had been received by the French statesman at Lyon on the 26th:

After months of struggle, we all of us—the mothers, wives and sisters of our brave warriors—turn, in our terror at the cruelty of our enemy, to you, Monsieur Herriot. We turn, with anguish and supplication, to a man who stands for a better Humanity—the Humanity of to-morrow which we would fain see become the Humanity of to-day.

The mechanism of Geneva is slow, and the war will go on pursuing its course before the sanctity of engagements at last prevails; but you have it in your power to use your authority for seeing that a stop is put to the cruel use of gas. Your heart cannot remain insensible to the sufferings of our children who—in a struggle which is made utterly unequal by the means that are at the enemy's disposal—are getting themselves cut to pieces. . . .

For centuries our people has known how to preserve intact the soil of our dear country. It has always known how to show a high courage; but to-day courage and self-sacrifice are not enough to repulse a rapacious enemy; the disproportion in means of warfare is too great. So our sons are being decimated, being burnt, being lacerated. They are dragging themselves along to escape the bite of the poison cloud which the enemy is launching upon us like a demon from the skies.

All of us who are suffering in sympathy with our soldiers, whose hearts are being broken by the calamity that is overwhelming us—we address to you this cry of distress on behalf of our husbands, our sons, our brothers. The horror of a war like this ought to be ended without a moment's delay.

We are sure that you will not remain deaf to our appeal. You know that an unjust war has been forced upon us. You are acquainted with the history of the last months, in which our independence has been recognized by everybody. It must not founder. Do not let it.

The last sound of this piteous voice crying in the Ethiopian wilderness—a voice which combined the accents of appeal and denunciation—was heard in a message which was communicated by the Emperor Haile Selassie to the correspondent of *The Times* at Addis Ababa on the 29th April:

Do the peoples of the World not yet realize that by fighting on until the bitter end I am not only performing my sacred duty to my people, but standing guard in the last citadel of collective security? Are they

too blind to see that I have my responsibilities to the whole of Humanity to face?

I must still hold on until my tardy allies appear. And if they never come, then I say prophetically and without bitterness: 'The West will perish'.

On the 2nd May the Emperor, with his family and his suite, left Addis Ababa by railway—to become an exile at the moment when his train, *en route* for Djibouti, passed out of Ethiopian into French territory.<sup>1</sup> In a letter dated the 7th May, which was published in *The Times* on the 8th, the Ethiopian Minister in London stated that 'a group of Ministers' were 'still carrying on the Government in the West, and' were 'in possession of the archives which were saved from Addis Ababa'. He added that 'under present conditions it would not be politic for' him 'to reveal the location of the Government headquarters, as this would merely invite the use of bombs and poison gas in the area'. This statement was repeated by Dr. Martin in a further letter of the 20th May which was published in *The Times* on the 21st. And these statements were not contrary to the information received by the British Government, to judge by a statement made in the House of Commons at Westminster by Mr. Baldwin on the 11th May in answer to a parliamentary question.

So far as His Majesty's Government are aware [Mr. Baldwin stated on this occasion] the constitution of the Ethiopian Cabinet is identical with that existing before the departure of the Emperor, with the exception of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, who accompanied His Majesty, while the Minister for War was recently killed in action.

A report coming from Khartum on the 13th May located the new provisional capital of the Empire of Ethiopia at Gore, a town lying slightly south of a line drawn due west from Addis Ababa at a point about two-thirds of the way from Addis Ababa to the Sudan frontier.

Meanwhile, the Italian troops had entered Addis Ababa on the 5th May, as is recorded in another part of this volume,<sup>2</sup> and Signor Mussolini was quick to treat this Italian military occupation of the Ethiopian capital, following upon the withdrawal of the reigning Emperor of Ethiopia from Ethiopian to foreign soil, as an event which signified, not merely the end of the Italo-Abyssinian War, but also the end of Abyssinia itself as a sovereign independent state. At 5.45 p.m. on the 5th May, 1936, an hour and three quarters after

<sup>1</sup> After arriving at Djibouti on the 3rd May, 1936, the Emperor was conveyed to Haifa on board a British warship between the 4th and 8th, arrived at Jerusalem on the 8th, and left Jerusalem for London on the 23rd. This second voyage, which he made, once again, on board a British warship, brought him to London on the 3rd June.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 400, below.

Marshal Badoglio's entry into Addis Ababa, the inhabitants of Italy were called out into the streets for a national rally to mark the end of the war in East Africa, in repetition of the so-called national mobilization of the 2nd October, 1935,<sup>1</sup> which had marked the opening of hostilities; and once again the crowds were addressed, from a balcony of the Palazzo Venezia, by Signor Mussolini.

I announce to the Italian people and to the World that the war is finished. I announce to the Italian people and to the World that peace is re-established. It is not without emotion and without pride that I, after seven months of bitter hostilities, utter this great word. But it is strictly necessary that I should add that it is our peace, the Roman peace, which is expressed in this simple, irrevocable, definitive proposition: Abyssinia is Italian—Italian in fact because occupied by our victorious armies, Italian by right because with the sword of Rome it is Civilization which triumphs over Barbarism. . . . At the rally of the 2nd October I solemnly promised that I would do everything possible in order to prevent an African conflict from developing into a European war. I have maintained that pledge, and I am more than ever convinced that to disturb the peace of Europe means to bring about the collapse of Europe. But I must immediately add that we are ready to defend our brilliant victory with the same intrepid and inexorable decision with which we have gained it.

The finishing touch was given to the *fait accompli* with which Signor Mussolini had now confronted the League of Nations and the World when, on the evening of the 9th May, he announced to the Italian people, from the same place, the passage of a decree annexing Abyssinia to Italy and investing the King of Italy with the title of Emperor:

Officers, N.C.O.s, soldiers of all the armed forces of the state in Africa and in Italy, Blackshirts of the revolution, Italian men and women in the Fatherland and in the World, listen.

With the decisions that you will learn within a few moments, decisions acclaimed by the Grand Council of Fascism, a great event is accomplished. The fate of Abyssinia is sealed to-day, the 9th May, in the fourteenth year of the Fascist era.

All knots were cut by our gleaming sword, and the African victory remains in the history of the fatherland entire and unsullied, a victory such as the legionaries that have fallen and those that survive dreamed of and willed. Italy has her empire at last: a Fascist empire because it bears the indestructible tokens of the will and of the power of the Roman lictors, because this is the goal towards which, during fourteen years, were spurred on the exuberant and disciplined energies of the young and dashing generations of Italy. An empire of peace, because Italy desires peace, for herself and for all men, and she decides upon war only when it is forced upon her by imperious, irrepressible necessities of life. An

<sup>1</sup> See p. 200, above.

empire of civilization and of humanity for all the populations of Abyssinia. That is in the tradition of Rome, who, after victory, associated the peoples with her own destiny.

Here is the law, O Italians, which closes one period of our history and opens up another like a vast pass opening on all the possibilities of the future:

'(1) The territories and the peoples that belonged to the Empire of Abyssinia are placed under the full and entire sovereignty of the Kingdom of Italy.

'(2) The Title of Emperor has been assumed for himself and for his successors by the King of Italy.'

Officers, N.C.O.s, soldiers of all the armed forces of the state in Africa and in Italy, Blackshirts, Italian men and women!

The Italian people has created the empire with its blood. It will fertilize it with its labour and will defend it against anybody whomsoever with its arms. In this supreme certainty, legionaries, raise up on high your insignia, your weapons, and your hearts, to salute after fifteen centuries the reappearance of the empire upon the fateful hills of Rome.

Will you be worthy of it? [Tremendous shouts of 'Yes'.]

This answering cry is as a sacred oath that binds you before God and before men for life and for death. Blackshirts, legionaries, the salute to the King.

By another decree, which was promulgated on the 10th May, Marshal Badoglio was appointed Governor-General of Ethiopia with the title of Viceroy and with full powers.<sup>1</sup>

At Geneva, on the 10th May, a copy of the Italian decree of the 9th was handed by Signor Bova Scoppa to Monsieur Avenol. Other copies were presented by Signor Grandi to the Foreign Office in Whitehall, and by Signor Cerruti to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the Quai d'Orsay, on the 12th. On the 14th and the 16th in Rome, the two decrees were converted into laws by successive acts of the Italian Chamber and the Italian Senate.

## (xi) The Italian Military Operations in Abyssinia

### (a) GEOGRAPHICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS

The scene of the war which was launched in East Africa by Signor Mussolini on the 3rd October, 1935, was one of the intermediate sections of a vast belt of country, defined by certain distinctive physiographical features, which stretched from south to north—through South-East and East-Central Africa and on through South-Western Asia—all the way from the Cape of Good Hope to the

<sup>1</sup> The appointment of a Governor-General with the title of Viceroy, and with authority over the Governors of Eritrea and Somalia, had been provided for in the second article of the decree of the 9th May, which was not quoted by Signor Mussolini in his speech.



northern extremity of Syria: a span of more than seventy degrees of latitude, while the average width of the zone was about ten degrees of longitude.

The outstanding features which gave an element of physiographical uniformity to the whole of this immense area were two. On the one hand, the zone was marked out by a chain of plateaux with mean altitudes ranging far above those of the adjoining land-surfaces; on the other hand, it was scored by a chain of gashes in the crust of the earth, and this intermittent Rift Valley cut so deep that in one section its floor was submerged below the waters of the Red Sea, while there were other sections (e.g. the Palestinian Ghūr and the East-African Danakil Depression) where the floor descended below sea-level without being invaded by sea-water (either remaining bone-dry, as in the Danakil Depression, or being covered by land-locked salt lakes, such as the Dead Sea).

The chain of plateaux consisted of the South African and Rhodesian High Veldts; the highlands of Tanganyika and Kenya Colony; the plateau (which was the highest in the chain) that comprised North-Western Eritrea as well as Abyssinia Proper; and, finally, two vast tilted slabs of country which were both separated from the Abyssinian Plateau by the Rift Valley, while they were separated from each other by the Gulf of Aden. The East African slab comprised Gallaland and Somaliland; and the direction of its slope was south-eastwards, from the sources of the Webi Shebeli River towards the Indian Ocean. The South-West Asian slab comprised the Yaman and the Hijāz and Syria and the Najd; and this slab sloped north-eastwards, from the head of the Wadi Rummah towards the Persian Gulf and the Basin of the Euphrates and the Tigris. At its northern end, this series of plateaux was cut off sharply by the Antitaurus Range: a link in a chain of folded mountains that ran—at right-angles to the Afrasian plateaux—east and west, across Asia and Europe and North-West Africa, from the Japanese and Indonesian archipelagos to the Atlantic headlands of the Pyrenees and the Atlas. At the southern foot of the Antitaurus, the Rift Valley, as well as the plateaux-chain, began; and from this northern terminal point the Rift cut its capricious course towards the south. It cleft 'Hollow Syria' from Mar'ash to 'Aqabah; gave admission to the waters of the sea from the head of the Gulf of 'Aqabah to the head of Annesley Bay; bared its floor again in the Danakil Depression (from which the waters of the Red Sea were dammed off by a line of volcanic mountains along the south-eastern section of the Eritrean shore); insinuated itself between the south-eastern escarpment of the Abyssinian Plateau

and the north-western escarpment of the Gallaland-Somaliland slab; and then side-stepped westward, from the line of Lake Stephanie to the line of Lake Rudolf, in order to cleave its way, down the whole length of Kenya Colony, in between the Kikuyu Highlands and the eastern watershed of the basin of the Victoria Nyanza.

Having thus placed the scene of Signor Mussolini's East African war in its general Afrasian setting, we may examine the local physiological and climatic features in rather greater detail.

The objective of the Italian act of aggression was the conquest of the territory which, in A D 1935, was included within the frontiers of the Empire of Ethiopia, and at this date the dominions of the Emperor Haile Selassie embraced the whole of the Abyssinian Plateau—except its northern extremity, beyond the upper waters of the River Mareb—as well as the adjoining section of the Gallaland-Somaliland slab, which was tilted back to back with the Abyssinian Plateau—the slab sloping down south-eastwards towards the Indian Ocean, while the plateau was inclined north-westwards towards the valley of the White Nile. The two escarpments faced each other across the Rift, which was occupied in this section by the valley of the River Hawash and by a chain of lakes (from Lake Zwai or Dembel to Lake Stephanie). The south-eastern escarpment of the plateau was crowned by the political capital of the Empire, Addis Ababa, and the north-western escarpment of the slab by the chief commercial centre, Harrar. The River Hawash and the Djibouti-Addis Ababa Railway both ran through the intervening hollow.

The Italians, on their side, were already in possession of the northern extremity of the plateau, between the line of the Mareb and the coast of the Red Sea, and also of the south-eastern edge of the slab, where it dipped below the waters of the Indian Ocean. The first of these two Italian footholds in East Africa constituted the Italian colony of Eritrea; the second the Italian colony of Somalia. Signor Mussolini's war aim was to unite these hitherto isolated Italian possessions by conquering the whole or part of the hitherto independent Empire of Ethiopia which lay between them; and accordingly he delivered his attack simultaneously on two fronts. In May 1936, when his operations were crowned with success, the Italian armies advancing from these two opposite starting-points eventually met and joined hands.<sup>1</sup> During the preceding seven months of hostilities, the war was waged in two separate war zones: a northern zone on the plateau and a south-eastern zone on the slab. These two zones differed so widely from one another in physiography and climate, and therefore

<sup>1</sup> See p. 409, below.

also in the military problems which they respectively presented, that it will be convenient to survey them separately.

Of the two, the Abyssinian Plateau, with which the Italians had to deal on the Northern Front, was decidedly the more formidable in itself; and it is all the more remarkable that this front should have been the scene of the decisive actions that broke the military and political resistance of the Emperor Haile Selassie to the act of aggression of which he and his people were the victims.

The general level of the plateau, which was well above 5,000 feet, was overtopped by mountain *massifs* which rose to more than 13,000 feet and which culminated at 15,400 feet on the summit of Ras Doshan, the highest peak of the Semyen. Yet, from the standpoint of a military invader (and especially a twentieth-century Frankish invader, who was putting his trust in mechanical wheeled transport), these towering mountains were not so serious an obstacle as the endless succession of cañons which had been ploughed through the crust of the plateau by the watercourses.

Even small watercourses cut deep channels in the soft rock. The larger rivers, aided by these conditions, have eroded valleys seven or eight miles wide at the plateau level and rapidly narrowing till at the bottom a river ninety to one hundred and twenty yards broad flows with little more than a belt of forest on each side. The river bottoms are not infrequently 2,000 and more feet below the general level, so that within a short distance one may experience the cold of the bare and frost-bound peaks that rise above the plateau to 13,000 feet and more, the cool and temperate climate of the actual plateau between six and seven thousand feet up, and the oppressive damp heat of the fever-stricken valley-bottoms with their tropical vegetation. . . . It follows from this characteristic configuration (a fairly level tableland from which mountains rise with for the most part rounded and accessible slopes, but seamed in every direction by steep-sided cañons whose bottoms are choked with tropical forest or bush) that roads for the most part avoid the valleys—which are the most serious obstacle to lateral, as they are entirely useless for longitudinal, progress—and follow the watersheds as far as possible, traversing the valleys at right angles. . . . It must, moreover, be remembered that during the rainy season all the streams, both great and small, become raging torrents; and since it is a characteristic of the larger Abyssinian rivers that they have curvilinear courses, containing a whole countryside in a huge bend, it comes about that from May to September the separate districts are frequently islands cut off from one another by impassable moats.<sup>1</sup>

This tooling of the country by erosion produced its effects on the small scale as well as on the large; for these island-provinces had

<sup>1</sup> *A Handbook of Abyssinia*, vol. i (London, 1920, H.M. Stationery Office), pp. 20-1.

their miniature counterparts in the *ambas*—‘isolated flat-topped hills with perpendicular sides’<sup>1</sup>—which were chiselled out by the more superficial action of the water on the plateau-surface. Thus Nature had fashioned Abyssinia Proper into a gigantic labyrinth of innumerable water-carved fortresses.

For an invader from the north, the one practicable route was along the brow of the eastern escarpment of the plateau: a mountain ridge with a mean height of 7,000–8,000 feet which ran north-and-south, along longitude 40°, through nearly seven degrees of latitude, from the western shore of Annesley Bay to the northern rim of the Hawash Valley between Ankober and Addis Ababa. This was the route which had been followed—as far as Amba Alagi—by the first ill-fated Italian expeditionary force in 1895, as well as by the British expeditionary force which had been shepherded as far as Magdala and back again without misadventure by Lord Napier in 1868; and it was by this route again that the Italian forces on the Northern Front marched—or rather, rolled on wheels—from the head of the Mareb to Addis Ababa between the 3rd October, 1935, and the 5th May, 1936.

The advantage of skirting the brow of the escarpment was that this enabled the invader to avoid the cañons; but he could only retain this advantage so long as he was content to make a frontal attack on every hostile line of defence that he encountered, without swerving either to right or to left. If the invader swerved to the left, he would precipitate himself over a precipice into the burning fiery furnace of the Danakil Desert on the floor of the Rift Valley. On the other hand, if he swerved to the right, he would at once find himself floundering among the cañons which he was seeking to escape; for the head waters of the rivers that cut their channels north-westwards through the plateau, on their way to join the White Nile, rose immediately west of the eastern escarpment, and from the start they ploughed deep. The Takazye, for example, had carved out its cañon to a depth of 2,000 feet within no more than ten miles of its source.<sup>2</sup>

In a homely simile, the Abyssinian Plateau might be likened to a comb, with the crest of the eastern escarpment for its back, and with its teeth represented by strips of plateau, running parallel with one another towards the west, and each divided from its neighbour by a river cañon. Alternatively, the country might be likened to one of those contrivances—consisting of a row of paving-stones set on edge, with a slot between each—which were sometimes erected in the English country-side in order to prevent the passage of cattle without hindering the transit of wheels or of human feet (except that any

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 39.

human foot that could bestride the Abyssinian cañons, and leap from *amba* to *amba*, must be on the legendary scale of a Hercules or an Atlas, or of Edward Lear's old man of Coblentz).

It may perhaps be asked why an invader from the north could not find an easier passage below the western foot of the plateau, where it sank to the level of the Sudanese plains; for the political frontier between the Empire of Ethiopia and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan ran well to the west of the foot-hills, so that a strip of lowland was included on the Abyssinian side of the line. The answer to this question is, in the first place, that the advantage of the terrain in this region was offset by the local drawbacks of climate and vegetation—a tropical moist belt and a matted jungle which flourished under physical conditions that were adverse to human activity. In the second place, an invading army which had hacked and sweated its way through this belt of jungle from the Setit to the Sobat would find itself as far as ever from Addis Ababa. For practical purposes, the brow of the eastern escarpment offered the only route that an invader could take. In the Italian invasion in 1935–6, it was not till March 1936 that Italian troops crossed the Takazye in the westerly lowland zone; and even then the operations in this quarter remained subsidiary to the main action farther east. It was not until the Abyssinian resistance had been shaken at Amba Aradam, and was on the point of being broken at Lake Ashangi, in the main field of action, that the Italians ventured upon this western advance, and then, when there were no Abyssinian armies left in being to dispute the invaders' progress, Signor Starace's lorries took the first opportunity of climbing out of the jungle-clad plains and mounting the western slope of the plateau in order to reach Gondar and to press on to the shores of Lake Tana.<sup>1</sup>

For a would-be invader of the Ethiopian Empire from the south-east, the task was in some respects easier. For example, he could count on longer intervals between the close seasons when military operations would be impeded—if not entirely suspended—by the rains; for while, on the Abyssinian Plateau, the Little Rains came down in April and May and the Great Rains in July and August, with a precarious lull in June—so that the campaigning season there might be confined to the autumn and winter—in Somaliland the two rainy seasons were both of them shorter, and were punctuated by a summer as well as a winter season of dry weather.<sup>2</sup> Again, the invader whose

<sup>1</sup> See p. 395, below.

<sup>2</sup> For some account of the rainfall in East Africa, see *op. cit.*, pp. 76–8, with the tables on pp. 90–2. By the date of the outbreak of the Italo-Abyssinian

base of operations was the coast of Italian Somaliland would not find his route dictated to him by cañons and escarpments.

The Gallaland-Somaliland slab might be likened to the ground floor of the auditorium of a theatre, with Italian Somaliland for the stalls and the Ethiopian territory in the Ogaden for the pit, while the back wall swept, in an immense semicircle, from Cape Gardafui through British Somaliland, and on through the Ethiopian provinces of Harrar and Arussi and Sidamo and Boran, till it ended—once more in British territory—in the neighbourhood of Mount Kenya. To any one who approached this theatre from the outside—that is to say, from the coast of the Gulf of Aden, or from the floor of the Rift Valley at any point between Djibouti and Nakuru—the back wall of the theatre would present a frowning escarpment which would be not much less forbidding than the opposite eastern escarpment of the Abyssinian Plateau. But this configuration of the Gallaland-Somaliland slab was a handicap to the defence, and not to the attack, in a war between Ethiopia and Italy. The scarped outer face of the retaining wall hindered the movement of Ethiopian troops or supplies to Harrar either from Dire Dawa, on the Djibouti-Addis Ababa Railway, or from Berbera, on the British Somaliland coast. On the other hand, the floor of the vast natural auditorium which this semicircular escarpment contained rose gently up from sea-level on the coast of Italian Somaliland to heights ranging between 6,000 and 8,000 feet on the brow of the containing wall immediately behind (that is, north-west of) Jigjiga and Harrar. An Italian army advancing upon these two vital points from the coast of Italian Somaliland had to encounter here neither the beetling precipices nor the torrential rains that impeded the progress of an Italian army advancing upon Addis Ababa from Massawa. At the same time, the southern theatre of war presented its own peculiar difficulties to the invader from overseas. Instead of being able to land his troops and supplies at an admirable natural harbour, he had to make the best of an open surf-smitten shore. When he had coped with the difficulties of landing, he had to make his way across a forlorn country—the Ogaden—in which the rainfall sufficed to turn the tracks to mud without providing drinking-water, while the vegetation was limited to a scrub

War in 1935, there does not seem to have been a sufficient accumulation of accurate scientific observations of the East African rainfall to permit any very authoritative generalizations as to quantity and seasonal distribution. The various estimates that were then published in the press were strangely diverse, and most of them were given the lie by the weather conditions that actually prevailed in East Africa during the seven months beginning with the 3rd October, 1935.

providing cover for the defenders without running to crops from which the invaders could draw food supplies for man or beast. Finally, the distance from Mogadiscio<sup>1</sup> to Harrar as the crow flies was nearly six hundred miles, as against a distance of not much more than four hundred and fifty miles as the crow flies from Massawa to Addis Ababa. In the event, the Italian operations on this front were notably less successful than those on the other. The earlier thrusts towards Jigjiga and Harrar were abortive; and General Graziani did not make himself master of any vital Abyssinian stronghold in the south until after the victory of Italy and defeat of Abyssinia in the war, taken as a whole, had already been decided by Marshal Badoglio's successes on northern battle-fields.

It will be seen that the Empire of Ethiopia within the frontiers of 1935, and *a fortiori* the Abyssinian Plateau, which was the home of the Amharan ruling race, was one of the great mountain fastnesses of the World—a fastness comparable to the Yaman and the Caucasus and Afghanistan and Tibet and the Atlas. At the moment of the outbreak of the Italo-Abyssinian War on the 3rd October, 1935, an observer of this struggle found himself confronted by one capital question: were the natural advantages which the physical features of the Ethiopian fastness conferred upon the defence sufficiently great to counteract the artificial advantages which were conferred, in this case, upon the attack by Italy's complete command (in contrast to Abyssinia's almost complete destituteness) of the weapons furnished by the latest developments of the modern Western industrial technique?

In a general way, it was evident that railways and lorries and tanks and armoured cars and aeroplanes were less potent against the primitive highlander than they were against the primitive nomad of the steppe or desert, where the newfangled mechanical means of transport had at last given the representatives of a sedentary society a decisive advantage over the Arab or Mongol with his living mount. The aeroplane and the armoured car could outrace the horse and camel; and when once the nomad had forfeited his superior mobility on his own ground, his military power was ham-strung. The highlander had less to fear from a mechanized attack, either from the ground or from the air; yet the military history of the

<sup>1</sup> During the period of the monsoons, the Italian base in Somalia was not Mogadiscio but Bandar Qasim, a port on the coast of the Gulf of Aden, under the lee of Cape Gardafui. As the crow flies, Bandar Qasim was nearer than Mogadiscio to Harrar, but in practice the distance was considerably greater, since the Italian troops could not take the direct route across British Somaliland.

past hundred years to some extent anticipated the lesson of the East African War of 1935-6 in showing that even the highlander's fastnesses were no longer impregnable against modern western technique. It was true that the British had never again attempted the conquest of Afghanistan after their disastrous venture in 1838-42, and that in Abyssinia in 1868 General Napier had come and seen but then, un-Caesar-like, had beaten a prudent retreat, instead of settling down to conquer. Napier's wisdom had been vindicated by Baratieri's disaster in 1896; and, after that lesson, the Italians had waited for almost forty years before again attempting the conquest of Abyssinia.

What were the considerations that led Mussolini to expect better fortune in 1935-6 than Crispi had experienced in 1895-6 in trying his hand at an East African military adventure? Mussolini may have encouraged himself with the reflection that these last remaining mountain fastnesses of Antique Man were proved not to be utterly impregnable by the fact that the Russians had successfully conquered the Caucasus between 1830 and 1864 and the French the Atlas between 1914 and 1934. The Russian feat had been performed before the aggressor's technical superiority had been enhanced by the invention of tanks and aeroplanes. Equipped with these latest additions to the Frankish armoury, why should not Italy acquit herself in Ethiopia as successfully as France had just acquitted herself in Morocco?

A comparison between the French military task in Morocco, which had been completed in 1934, and the Italian military task in Ethiopia, the first stage of which<sup>1</sup> was completed within seven months of the opening of hostilities on the 3rd October, 1935, may perhaps throw some light upon the nature of the enterprise which Signor Mussolini carried to this materially triumphant conclusion.

Superficially, there were certain manifest resemblances between the East African and the North-West African situation. The Atlas was a mountain fastness of nearly the same size as the Abyssinian Plateau (excluding the rest of the Empire of Ethiopia). The French invaders had had to come, like the Italians, from overseas, and they had delivered a converging attack upon their objective from two fronts—the Algerian front corresponding to the Eritrean, while the French forces which assailed the Atlas across the Moroccan lowlands from the Moroccan coast of the Atlantic played a rôle which may be compared with that of the Italian forces which were striking at Harrar from the Somali coast of the Indian Ocean. Again, the French operations against the Atlas had been hampered by the existence of two enclaves of territory under foreign régimes—the Spanish Zone and

<sup>1</sup> See the footnote on p. 370, below.



the International Zone round Tangier<sup>1</sup>—which had occupied the Moroccan coast-line between the two French bases of operations; and these Moroccan enclaves had their counterparts in East Africa in British and French Somaliland. In these respects, the French problem in Morocco and the Italian problem in Ethiopia were analogous; but there were also a number of differences between the two situations; and these differences, which were not less important than the resemblances, were all to the Italians' disadvantage.

There was a difference of scale, a difference of distance, and a difference of climate. While in scale the Atlas might be not very much smaller in extent than the plateau of Abyssinia Proper, the whole Empire of Morocco was only about one-third of the size of the whole Empire of Ethiopia; and while the Italian base of operations in Eritrea might be as close to Northern Abyssinia as the French base in Algeria was to Western Morocco, the Italian bases on the coast of the Indian Ocean were separated by some six hundred miles from the foot-hills of Harrar and Arussi and Sidamo, whereas the French bases on the coast of the Atlantic were only about one hundred miles distant from the north-western foot-hills of the Atlas. The difference in the distance between the scene of operations and the home country was still more striking. Whereas the sea-passage from Bordeaux to Casablanca was about 1,000 miles, from Marseilles to Casablanca about 900 miles, and from Marseilles to Oran 525 miles, it was over 2,000 miles from Naples to Massawa and nearly 4,000 from Naples to Mogadiscio.<sup>2</sup> The fact was that while Ethiopia was an integral part of Tropical Africa, Morocco (like the rest of the Maghrib) was a part of Europe in everything except the pedantry of geographical definitions; and its essentially European character declared itself, not only in the shortness of the distance from France, but also in the temperateness of the climate. The Atlantic lowlands had the climate of Portugal, the Mediterranean coast the climate of the Riviera, the High Atlas the climate of Switzerland. For European troops, the climatic conditions were incomparably better here than in the Ogaden or in the Danakil Depression or in the cañons of the Mareb and the Takazye.

When we pass from the physical to the political and economic conditions, we find striking differences again, and once more to the

<sup>1</sup> See the *Survey for 1925*, vol. i, Part II, sections (ii), (v), and (viii); the *Survey for 1929*, Part II, section (ii).

<sup>2</sup> The use of Bandar Qasim instead of Mogadiscio during the first two months of the campaign shortened the sea passage from Italy to the Southern Front at the cost of lengthening the line of communications overland on African ground.

disadvantage of the Italians. While Signor Mussolini cast himself for the odious part of an aggressor, the French took care to operate in Morocco as the legally constituted protectors and agents of the legitimate sovereign of the country. While the Italians, by intrigue and bribery, sought to break up the political unity of Ethiopia by detaching the Rases from the Negus, a vindication of the authority of the Sharif *de jure* was the form in which the French asserted their own authority *de facto* over the Moroccan highlanders. As a result of this difference of policy, the French welded the Moroccan clansmen and feudatories together under their own aegis, while the Italians welded them together, under the leadership of the Negus, in opposition to Italy's aggressive designs. Marshal Lyautey had established, and bequeathed to his successors, the principle that 'the adversaries of to-day are the collaborators of to-morrow', whereas Marshal Badoglio, reversing General de Bono's methods of relative considerateness towards the civil population of the invaded territory, staked his fortunes on obtaining quick returns by an intensive campaign of totalitarian frightfulness.

Thus the French had lightened for themselves, by their tact and their humanity, a task which was intrinsically less formidable than the Italian enterprise in East Africa, whereas the Italians, by their methods of barbarism, rendered their task in one way still more arduous than it was bound to be in any case. It must also be borne in mind that France was a very much richer and stronger country than Italy to begin with; and that Signor Mussolini had launched his East African war at a moment when Italy was in desperate financial and economic straits, while, as a declared aggressor, he had to conduct the war under the handicap of sanctions which were a serious impediment—however far the sanctions actually imposed on Italy in 1935 might fall short of the terms of Article 16 of the Covenant.<sup>1</sup>

When all these considerations were taken into account, some light was thrown on Signor Mussolini's material achievement in East Africa by the fact that it had taken France twenty-two years—leaving out of the reckoning the five years 1914–18, during which France had been compelled to mark time in Africa by the exigencies of the war in Europe—to complete the subjugation of Morocco from first to last.<sup>2</sup>

How was it, then, that Italy succeeded—with smaller resources and under greater difficulties and handicaps—in achieving in seven months

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 215 *seqq.*, above.

<sup>2</sup> The French began their occupation of Morocco in 1907 and completed it in 1934, and this makes twenty-two years in all, if the five years of war in Europe (1914–18 inclusive) are left out of account.

the first stage, at any rate,<sup>1</sup> of a military undertaking of a kind for which France, in comparable circumstances, had required no less than twenty-two years? In the light of the event, several different causes can be discerned; and these may be mentioned here without any attempt on the part of the writer (writing, in short perspective, within less than a month of the Italian entry into Addis Ababa) to assess their relative importance.

One conspicuous cause of the rapidity and completeness of the Italian victory was the intensive use by Marshal Badoglio, particularly in the last stages of the campaign, of the newfangled methods of barbarism which had now been placed at the disposal of any Frankish Power on the war-path by the latest application of modern Western physical science to practical affairs. The spraying of poison gas in liquid form from aeroplanes, even more than the dropping of explosive and incendiary bombs, appears to have finally broken the *moral* of the Abyssinian civil population behind the front, as well as that of the Abyssinian forces in the field. By the time when Marshal Badoglio resorted to the use of gas on a large scale, the Abyssinian troops on the Northern Front had already got the better of the bomb by teaching themselves the art of concealment. The Italian mustard gas was effective because it deprived the Abyssinians of the cover that Nature had provided for them. The bush and forest in which they had been hiding from the Italian bombing planes were now drenched with a gas that clung to woods and fields and valleys for many days on end without losing its effectiveness. In all probability it was this use of mustard gas that enabled the Italians—as no other weapon could have done—to break the resistance of the Abyssinian armies before the beginning of the Great Rains, and thus to forestall a six-months' standstill of an unfinished war under such conditions that the combined effect of climate and sanctions might perhaps have brought Italy to her knees.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This qualification is important, because, at the end of these seven months, the Italians had achieved no more than a skeleton occupation of the principal routes and towns of the Empire of Ethiopia—and this only in the north and east, while a vast region in the south-west was still wholly free from any Italian trespass, even in the form of an air-reconnaissance. By contrast, the twenty-two years that were taken by the French in subjugating Morocco cover the subjugation of the last defiant enclaves of 'dissidence'. It remained to be seen how long it would take the Italians, after May 1936, to carry their conquest of Abyssinia to the same totalitarian completion; and the experience of the British in the South African War suggested that the operations following the entry into the enemy capital might prove longer and more arduous than the first phase of the campaign.

<sup>2</sup> The importance of the part played by poison gas in causing the Abyssinian *débâcle* was differently estimated by various persons who were in a position

A second outstanding cause of the Italian military achievement was the singular failure of the Abyssinians to make full use of the military advantages that were offered them—as some offset to the overwhelming technical superiority of their assailants—by the very fact that they were a socially backward people whose homeland, in which they were standing on the defensive, was a natural mountain fastness (or rather, a congeries of fastnesses ranged one behind the other). With their light equipment, modest needs and marvellously broken *terrain*, the Abyssinians were masters of all the three requisites for waging guerrilla warfare; and, had the ruling element in the Ethiopian Empire consisted of Rifis from Morocco or of Pathans from the North-West Frontier of India, we may conjecture that even Marshal Badoglio's rain of poison gas might have proved a boomerang weapon which would merely have branded the wielder of it with dishonour and have exasperated the victim into a redoubled will to war instead of cowing him into abandoning the struggle as hopeless. Pathans or Rifis with an Abyssinia to play in would assuredly have worn down an Italian invader's nerves and have cut up his lines of communication without ever giving him a respite, and at the same time without ever offering his Italian airmen satisfactory targets for explosive bombs or even for poison sprays. By contrast, the Amharas, after having lived for more than two thousand years in an ideal nursery for guerrillas, had never formed a tradition of guerrilla warfare and did not show any great aptitude for acquiring the art under duress. Before the war began they had had a reputation for great mobility as well as for indomitable courage; but this reputation had been won in short campaigns, in which their victories had been obtained by massed attacks and their staying power and capacity for initiative had not been tested. They failed lamentably to adapt their

to form a first-hand opinion. Some considered it the decisive factor, whereas others held that it was of relatively little importance. The Emperor himself laid great stress on this factor (see p. 483, below); and among those who considered it decisive was the leader of the Dutch Red Cross unit, Dr. Winckel. He was reported to have said that 'once they had seen the effects of gas the Abyssinians were completely demoralized and behaved like frightened children' (see *The Times*, 19th May, 1936). On the other hand, Vehib Pasha, a Turkish soldier who took a leading part in organizing the defence on the Southern Front, considered gas relatively unimportant and attributed the defeat of the Abyssinians principally to the success of Italian bribery and propaganda and of the system of espionage carried on by agents in Italian pay. While he admitted that gas-bombing was demoralizing, he pointed out that the nature of the country limited its effects. The gas hung in the valleys, and the troops could escape it by moving up the hills (see *The Manchester Guardian*, 4th June, 1936). It may be noted in this connexion that Vehib Pasha had first-hand experience only of conditions on the Southern Front, where gas was used less freely than in the north.

traditional ideas of warfare when they had to meet an enemy whose overwhelming superiority in armaments made the result of pitched battles a foregone conclusion.

The Emperor's European advisers were said to have impressed upon him as a guiding principle that he should avoid giving battle to the invaders, and should leave it to the mountains and deserts of the country to do their own work. On the 3rd October, after the Italian advance had begun, an order for general mobilization which the Emperor had signed on the 29th September was promulgated, and he was reported to have given the following advice to the men who assembled at Addis Ababa on that day in answer to the summons :

Be cunning, be savage, face the enemy one by one, two by two, five by five in the fields and mountains. Do not take white clothes, do not mass as now, hide, strike suddenly, fight the nomad war, steal, snipe and murder singly. To-day the war has begun, therefore scatter and advance to victory.

The remarkable restraint which had been exercised by the Abyssinians during the period of several months when Italy was openly engaged in perfecting her preparations for the attack which was launched on the 3rd October, 1935, appeared to be evidence of a greater sense of discipline and of a greater readiness to obey the orders of the Central Government than had generally been attributed to them. Nevertheless, it was doubtful from the outset whether the Emperor would be able to impose his conceptions of strategy upon the feudal chiefs who—in accordance with a tradition which could not be broken at this moment of crisis—commanded in the field the forces which had been levied in their provinces, irrespective of whether they possessed any capacity for generalship or not. Moreover, the execution of a general plan of defence, demanding co-ordination and co-operation between different leaders, was virtually out of the question in the absence of a general staff and of a trained intelligence system ; and the position was complicated still further by old rivalries between local chiefs (many of whom, in addition, had long resented the Emperor's attempts to impose a centralized authority upon them).<sup>1</sup> In these circumstances, it was not surprising that the Emperor did not succeed in restraining some of his generals from following their own inclinations and massing their forces in disastrous attempts to hold up the Italian advance.

It was also open to doubt whether the large-scale mobilization which took place after the 3rd October—when there was a constant influx of troops into Addis Ababa from the provinces—was not a

<sup>1</sup> For examples, see pp. 115 *seqq.*, above.

mistake from the Abyssinian point of view. The organization of anything but the most rudimentary commissariat system was virtually impossible in view of the primitive state of communications, and the armies were therefore obliged to rely mainly upon the customary system of carrying a limited supply of food with them and living off the country when that was exhausted. This method precluded the maintenance of large forces in one district for any length of time, and when supplies began to run short the armies gradually melted away as the men drifted back to their homes. The system of living off the country also helped to foment the hostility felt by the native peasants towards soldiers of different race and language from other parts of the country, who were often as alien to them as the Italians, and thus tended to make the population of the districts invaded by the Italians less inclined to resist the invasion.

In trying conclusions with the Abyssinians, the Italians seem to have reckoned upon finding and exploiting a division in their ranks. Down to the eve of the outbreak of war in 1935, the authority of the King of Kings at Addis Ababa continued to be challenged by serious insurrections on the part of important feudatories;<sup>1</sup> and this feudal unrest was most active in the native Amharan kingdoms of Gojam and Amhara and Tigre, which resented a Shoan hegemony. These three kingdoms lay between the Shoan Imperial capital at Addis Ababa and the frontier on which the Imperial dominions marched with the Italian colony of Eritrea—the direction from which, for geographical reasons,<sup>2</sup> the main assault would have to be delivered in any Italian attempt at a military conquest of Abyssinia. The northern extremity of Tigre, beyond the line of the River March, had been incorporated into the Italian dominions in Eritrea by the terms of the Italo-Abyssinian peace treaty of the 26th October, 1896, which had been concluded after the Italian military disaster at Adowa; and in Eritrea as a whole a majority of the population consisted of Tigrean-speaking Monophysite Christians and Muslims who had previously been under Egyptian rule.

In these circumstances, it did not seem an impossible task for Italian diplomacy to detach the rest of Tigre from the Empire of Ethiopia, and attract it into the Italian sphere of influence, by playing upon the susceptibilities and ambitions of the Tigrean Rases. A somewhat similar state of feudal discord had materially assisted the French to make themselves masters of Morocco.<sup>3</sup> The Ethiopian Imperial Government alleged—though the allegation was intrinsically

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 115 *seqq.*, above.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 362 *seqq.*, above.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 369, above.

difficult to prove—that this sowing of feudal sedition was one of the chief duties of the Italian consuls who had been planted, during the years immediately preceding the war of 1935–6, in the capitals of fiefs in the interior of the Empire where there was far too small a volume of Italian trade to justify the expense of a consulate from the business point of view.<sup>1</sup> Whatever may have been the Italians' hopes and aims and activities in this direction, there were other relevant precedents which augured less well than the Moroccan precedent for Italian success. For example, when the British had invaded Afghanistan in 1838, they had had to deal with a feudal society which was as deeply divided against itself as the Morocco of 1907 or the Abyssinia of 1935; but the challenge of a foreign invasion had stimulated the Afghans on that occasion to suspend their family quarrels while they fell upon the invading army and dealt it an annihilating blow; and, in the event, the Anglo-Afghan precedent proved to be more in line than the Franco-Moroccan precedent with the Italo-Abyssinian case. From beginning to end of the war of 1935–6, there appears to have been only one notable defection of a Tigrean Ras from the Shoan to the Italian camp; and the treachery of Ras Gugsä<sup>2</sup> was much more than offset by the fact that almost the whole of the resistance to the Italian invasion on the Northern Front during the first phase of the war—before the battle of Amba Aradam (11th–15th February)—was carried out by Tigrean troops under their local feudal leaders.<sup>3</sup>

The Italians had hopes of detaching from the Emperor's cause not only the recalcitrant Tigrean Rases but also the more or less grievously oppressed non-Amharan subject peoples: Danakil in the north-east; Somalis in the south-east; Harrāris between the two; Gallas in the south-west, and negroes along the Abyssino-Sudanese frontier—if ever the Italian armies were to succeed in penetrating into this remote extremity of the invaded empire. Many of these subject peoples were notoriously ill treated and were presumably discontented, in a proportionate degree, with the Abyssinian régime; but the worst treated were those on the west and south-west who happened to be the furthest removed from the self-constituted 'liberators' reach; and the rest, for various reasons, were not eager to play the Italian game. The nomadic Danakil and Somalis were set upon maintaining their *de facto* independence against all comers (though many of their fight-

<sup>1</sup> See p. 374, above.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 383, below.

<sup>3</sup> The mutinousness in the Emperor Haile Selassie's own household which was the immediate cause of his withdrawal from his dominions at the beginning of May 1936 seems to have shown itself in the form, not of treason on the part of the feudal chiefs, but of demoralization among the Emperor's own personal following. (See p. 399, below.)

ing-men enlisted individually as mercenaries in the Italian service and then fought for their European paymasters with all their native ferocity). The autonomous Sultan of Aussa was anxious to 'spot the winner' before taking the hazardous step of transferring his allegiance.<sup>1</sup> The *ci-devant* Kingdom of Harrar, with its ancient Islamic culture, was the home fief of the reigning Ethiopian Imperial House,<sup>2</sup> and was therefore politically favoured, besides profiting economically from the trade between the interior of the Empire and the two ports of Djibouti and Berbera—ports which were both in foreign, but neither of them in Italian, hands. These considerations, reinforced by the presence of a strong Amharan garrison, ensured the loyalty of Harrar to Addis Ababa in 1935, and this loyalty was inimical to the Italian ambition of conquering at least a corridor of continuous territory between the two Italian colonies of Eritrea and Somalia, since Harrar lay right in the fairway. The Abyssinian forces holding the fortified positions covering Harrar and Jigjiga do not appear to have been troubled by Harrārī disaffection in their rear; and before the second city of the Empire was entered by General Graziani's troops on the 8th May, 1936, any tendency among the Harrārīs to look forward with pleasurable anticipation to the prospect of a change of foreign masters must have been seared and cauterized by Italian bombs. The only non-Amharan community that unquestionably played the part for which they had been cast by the Italian propaganda were the Wallo and Azebu Gallas.<sup>3</sup> Established, as they were, astride the eastern rim of the plateau between Addis Ababa and the Northern Front, with the Emperor Haile Selassie's headquarters in their country at Dessye, these Gallas found themselves in a commanding strategic position in the Italo-Abyssinian War of 1935-6; they turned against their Amharan masters at the earliest opportunity; and their disaffection seems to have had an important influence upon the war on the Northern Front in its most critical stage.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See p. 386, footnote 3, below.

<sup>2</sup> Harrar had been conquered by the Shoa King Menelik, a cousin of the Emperor Haile Selassie, in 1886, after it had been evacuated by the Egyptians, who had been in occupation of the city and province since 1875. It was the incorporation of Harrar that gave Shoa her latter-day predominance among the Amharan kingdoms. It was thanks to this accession of power that the Imperial Crown passed to Shoa from Tigre when the Emperor John was succeeded by the Emperor Menelik in 1889.

<sup>3</sup> The Wallo Gallas had been forcibly converted from Islam to Monophysite Christianity by the Emperor John II (*imperabat* A.D. 1872-89). (*A Handbook of Abyssinia* [London, 1920, H.M. Stationery Office], pp. 112 and 143.)

<sup>4</sup> See p. 392, below.



Yet, important as the above-mentioned causes of Signor Mussolini's military triumph in East Africa might be, they were probably all merely subsidiary to another cause which was psychological in character and which sprang from the social conditions prevailing at the moment, not in the African empire which was Italy's prey, but in the predatory European country itself. On the morrow of the victorious conclusion of the campaign, it looked as though the fundamental cause of the Italian dictator's African success was his ability to exact—or even evoke—from his followers an effort and a sacrifice which were on a totally different scale from those which any other Frankish Government had ever previously ventured to demand from its people for the sake of acquiring a colonial empire. This power to mobilize and organize and put to work the spiritual and material resources of a whole nation for the deliberate commission of an enormous public crime was the real secret of Signor Mussolini's military triumph in East Africa in 1935-6; and by the same token this was the most formidable of the problems with which this sensational victory of evil confronted the League of Nations and the world at large.

At the same time, the Italian national *Aktionsfähigkeit* (to use the current German National-Socialist term) which had reaped this rich reward was dangerous in its limitations as well as in its extent, and dangerous for Italy herself as well as for her neighbours.

On the one hand, it was now evident that, under Fascist leadership, the Italians had been willing, in a bad cause, to make exertions and to pay a price and to take a risk which the French and British electorates, under a democratic régime, had shown themselves unwilling to venture upon in a good cause when the challenge was delivered to them by Signor Mussolini. The young men of Italy had submitted to be mobilized in their hundreds of thousands for military service; the Italian bourgeoisie had acquiesced in an expenditure on the African war which in some form, sooner or later, would have to be met out of their pockets; and the Italian nation as a whole had accepted the risk of acting in defiance of their fellow states members of the League of Nations with the United Kingdom at their head—a risk which might have come home to roost in the form of a choice of having to consent to the frustration of the African adventure or else having to make war upon the World. No French or British statesman who was in office at the time dreamed of making any comparable demands upon his own countrymen for the sake—not of a tawdry colonial adventure, but of the supreme political object of upholding the reign of law and order in the domain of international relations.

Regarded in this light, Signor Mussolini's triumph was imposing; but there was another light in which it was apparent that he had deliberately and astutely won a triumph 'on the cheap'. The risk of being confronted with the choice of failing to conquer Abyssinia or else having to fight the World could be boldly discounted by Signor Mussolini as soon as he was informed of the tenor of the conversation between Monsieur Laval and Sir Samuel Hoare at Geneva on the 10th September, 1935<sup>1</sup>—and we may assume that Monsieur Laval had already conveyed this information to Rome before Sir Samuel Hoare's delivery, at Geneva on the 11th, of a speech which could be listened to with equanimity—notwithstanding its brave language—by an intending Italian aggressor who was aware of the limits which the British statesman had agreed, only the day before, to place, till further notice, upon his own action and his country's. Again, the distraintment on the wealth of the Italian bourgeoisie was postponed until a later day by a combination of clever temporary financial makeshifts. And, finally, only an infinitesimally small minority of the Italian conscripts who were mobilized and shipped to Africa were called upon to make the supreme sacrifice of life itself in the cause of conquering a colonial empire for their country.

Throughout the campaign of 1935-6 the Italian High Command in East Africa evidently took the utmost pains to keep down to a minimum the casualties in the ranks of the native Italian troops—both conscripts and Blackshirt volunteers. As much as possible of the fighting was performed by the airmen—who could reconnoitre and bomb and spray with impunity an enemy who possessed no Air Force at all and hardly any effective anti-aircraft artillery. What the airmen could not do was done, as far as the *terrain* allowed,<sup>2</sup> by tanks and armoured cars—which, likewise, could operate with impunity against an enemy who was destitute of the technical equipment for combating them. And if and when it proved indispensable to bring infantry into action, the hand-to-hand bayonet-fighting was imposed in the first place upon natives, not of Italy but of Africa: Eritrean conscripts and Somali or Libyan mercenaries. It was only in the fourth line that the Italian infantry were brought into action to fight the Abyssinians on approximately equal terms. This being the Italian policy, the overwhelming technical superiority of the Italian army, in combination with the marked strategical and tactical

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 183-5, above.

<sup>2</sup> On the Northern Front, tanks appear to have achieved little, and armoured cars nothing at all. On the Southern Front, these weapons were useful in the operations against Ras Desta in the south-west (see pp. 403-6, below), but were not conspicuously effective on other sectors.

ineptitude of the Italians' Abyssinian opponents, made it possible for the Italian High Command to achieve the conquest of Abyssinia at an astonishingly low cost in lives. The final casualty list, which was published in Rome on the 2nd June, 1936, and which covered the whole period from the 1st January, 1935, to the 31st May, 1936, inclusive, gave the death-roll of Italian troops of African race as 1,593, that of Italian workmen of Italian race as 453, and that of Italian troops of Italian race as 2,313. Of these last, only 1,148 (according to the official figures) had met their deaths in battle; and, after account has been taken of 125 who died of wounds and 31 who were reported missing, we are left with the figure of 1,009 (that is, nearly half the total) for the number of Italian troops of Italian race who must have met their deaths through the non-martial agencies of accidents or sickness. While, at the time of writing, it was impossible for an unofficial non-Italian observer to verify these Italian statistics, there was no reason to believe that the actual figures were out of all relation to the published returns.

It will be seen that the conquest of the last remaining independent native African empire had cost Italy fewer Italian lives than she would stand to lose in the first few seconds of a war waged against a European antagonist equipped with the same newfangled armaments and equally prepared to employ poison gas or any other ruthless application of Physical Science to lethal purposes. This fact was evidently not hid from Signor Mussolini himself, as he showed in his insistence upon the distinction between a European war and an African 'colonial operation'. At the same time, the head of the Italian state was encouraging his countrymen in May 1936 to surrender themselves to as high an elation and as buoyant a self-confidence as though the enemy whom they had just defeated in the field had been not Abyssinia but Great Britain. This illusion was facile, since Italy had in fact succeeded in inflicting on Great Britain a first-class defeat of a diplomatic order; and the resulting situation was fraught with dangers of conflict, since at this time no man alive—not Signor Mussolini and not Mr. Baldwin himself—could foretell at what point the people of the United Kingdom would throw off their mask of pacifism and would show their teeth.

With these considerations in mind, we may now record the history of the hostilities in East Africa in the Italo-Abyssinian War of 1935-6.

#### (b) THE POSITIONS OF THE BELLIGERENTS ON THE 3RD OCTOBER, 1935

When the Italians launched their attack upon Abyssinia on the 3rd October, 1935, it was estimated that their armed forces in Abyssinia

amounted to about a quarter of a million men, of whom some 50,000 or 60,000 were natives.<sup>1</sup> Of the White troops, four divisions belonged to the regular army and there were also four divisions of Blackshirt militia. In addition, there were a very large number of workmen who had been despatched to the colonies for the purpose of road-making and other non-combatant services. The Italian army was, of course, fully supplied with modern armaments, including mountain guns, light tanks, and aeroplanes. Their air strength was believed to be not less than 300 machines, and it was obvious that the Italians' undisputed control of the air would be one of their greatest assets. Other assets which were likely to be of special importance in helping to solve the 'logistical' problem of transporting a large and highly mechanized force through a country of mountains, river gorges and deserts, were the exceptionally high degree of skill possessed by Italian engineers, and the endurance and capacity for continuous hard work in the most difficult circumstances for which the Italian labourer enjoyed a well-earned reputation.

While the Abyssinian Government had vast resources of manpower upon which they could draw, only a very small proportion of the men whom they could put into the field had received even the most elementary training in Western methods of warfare. According to an estimate made by foreign press correspondents in Addis Ababa in September 1935,<sup>2</sup> a total of 1,083,000 men could be mobilized, but the Imperial Guard which had been trained by Belgian and Swedish officers probably accounted for not more than 30,000 of the total. The rest was made up of feudal armies raised in the provinces by local chiefs, and these local forces not only had little or no knowledge of modern warfare but also lacked modern weapons. The state of Abyssinian armaments was a matter of guess-work, but it was certain that the supply of up-to-date small arms was quite inadequate to the needs of the forces which could be mobilized. According to one estimate,<sup>3</sup> about half a million men might be armed with rifles of some kind, but many of these would date from Menelik's

<sup>1</sup> An official statement issued in Rome on the 20th October, 1935, announced that Italy had 1,200,000 men under arms, of whom 200,000 were in the colonies. The despatch of troops had been accelerated during the last days before the invasion of Abyssinia began. During the first three weeks of September more than 22,000 men were reported to have passed through the Suez Canal, and in the week ending the 2nd October the number was said to be 23,000. The calling up of men to the colours and the despatch of reinforcements to East Africa continued after the outbreak of hostilities, and more than 38,000 men passed through the Canal during November 1935.

<sup>2</sup> See *The Times*, 24th September, 1935.

<sup>3</sup> See *The Manchester Guardian*, 17th September, 1935.

days.<sup>1</sup> There were believed to be not more than 100,000 modern rifles available, and no great stocks of ammunition.<sup>2</sup> The armament of the Imperial Guard was said to include 500 machine-guns, and they had also a certain number of mortars, but no artillery. There were about a dozen commercial aeroplanes in the country.

The signature of the order for general mobilization by the Emperor Haile Selassie on the 29th September was used by the Italian High Command as a pretext for advancing into Abyssinia; but, in point of fact, there was reason to believe that the 3rd October had already been fixed, some time in advance, as the date for the launching of the attack, and that the movement of troops up to the Eritrean frontier which took place on the 1st and 2nd October was in accordance with a cut-and-dried plan.

The great majority of the Italian forces in East Africa were concentrated in Eritrea, and the commander in Somaliland, General Graziani, had at his disposal, when the advance began, only two divisions—one European and one African. The motives for this unequal division of forces were probably partly political—for reasons of prestige it was considered necessary that the ground which Italian troops had been compelled to evacuate in 1896 should be reoccupied as rapidly as possible—but the decisive factor was the difficulty of communications in the south. During the earlier stages of the campaign, when General Graziani's base was at Bandar Qasim,<sup>3</sup> it was

<sup>1</sup> At the end of October 1935 it was reported that stores of arms which had been buried in secret places by Menelik's orders were being unearthed for the use of men who were going to the front.

<sup>2</sup> The effects of the restrictions which were placed on the export of munitions from European countries to Abyssinia during the summer of 1935 (see pp. 164-5, above) had been particularly serious in connexion with supplies of ammunition. Even after Italy had been declared the aggressor and the embargo had been lifted (see p. 223, above), only small quantities of munitions made their way into Abyssinia. Manufacturers were reluctant to do business with the side which they expected to lose the war, and they refused to grant the Abyssinians credit. Such purchases as they were able to make for cash were said to have been financed partly out of the Emperor Menelik's war chest, and partly out of the Emperor Haile Selassie's private fortune. The attitude of the French officials at Djibouti constituted a further obstacle. They were reported at an early stage to be making difficulties over the transit of munitions along the railway to Addis Ababa, and at the beginning of 1936 they refused altogether to give the necessary transit licenses. In the middle of October 1935, a proposal was said to be under consideration for an Italian undertaking not to bomb the railway in return for an Abyssinian undertaking not to use it for the transport of munitions. No agreement on these lines was reached, but the Italians did refrain from attacking the railway, and their restraint was generally attributed to an understanding with France of which the French attitude in regard to the transport of munitions was the outcome.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 366, above, footnote.

impossible to supply more than two divisions in the field, and the problem remained serious even when the port of Mogadiscio came into use—which was not until after the campaign had been in progress for about two months. Events were to prove that the Italians were right in their decision to throw their weight into the northern campaign. Before the war began Signor Mussolini was believed to have been warned by the Italian General Staff that the process of establishing military control over the whole of Abyssinia might take several years, and that even the less ambitious aim of uniting Eritrea and Somalaha by the occupation of Tigre in the north, Ogaden in the south, and part of the province of Harrar in the centre, could only be attained after lengthy operations. Probably not even the most sanguine prophet foresaw at this stage that the Italian army would enter Addis Ababa seven months after it had crossed the Mareb <sup>1</sup>

In the early days of the war there were many rumours concerning an Italian force, composed of Askaris with a few White officers and supplied with armoured cars and aeroplanes, which was said to have advanced across the desert from Asab to the eastern slopes of Mount Mussa Ali, in the angle between Eritrea and French Somaliland.<sup>2</sup> This force did not achieve either of the alternative objects—the occupation of Dessye or the cutting of the railway from Djibouti to Addis Ababa—which were attributed to it in Addis Ababa, and although it was reported in Rome at the beginning of December that road building was in progress on this central sector and that it was expected to become increasingly important as the general campaign progressed, there was in fact no further news for many weeks of any Italian activities east of the plateau. The Italian campaigns in the north and in the south of Abyssinia were virtually independent of each other, and the course of operations on the two fronts can therefore be followed separately.

<sup>1</sup> It may be doubted whether Signor Mussolini himself expected to make a total conquest of the Emperor Haile Selassie's dominions at the time when he was preparing to commit his act of aggression, or indeed at any time, even after the opening of hostilities, until the very last phase of the war. Possibly it was only the outcome of the Battle of Lake Ashangi (31st March–4th April) that opened Marshal Badoglio's eyes to the fact that a totalitarian victory was within his grasp; and this was only a month before the withdrawal of the Emperor from Ethiopian soil and the Italian occupation of Addis Ababa.

<sup>2</sup> According to a report telegraphed by the Abyssinian Government to Geneva on the 2nd October, Italian troops had invaded Abyssinian territory in the region south of Mount Mussa Ali before the main force in the north began its advance across the Mareb. This report was denied by the Italian Government (see p. 199, above).

## (c) THE CAMPAIGN IN THE NORTH

General de Bono's original plan of campaign in the north was that of a gradual advance in irresistible strength, with frequent halts for the organization of communications, and with as little interference as possible with the normal life of the inhabitants of the occupied territory. This method of slow-but-sure progress was presumably designed to avoid any risk of a repetition of the events of 1896, and it would also be extremely difficult for the Abyssinians to counter effectively; but it would have the disadvantage of imposing a considerable strain upon the *moral* of the troops in the field and of the Italian nation as a whole, as well as upon the country's financial resources—even on the assumption that no interference in Italy's plans was to be expected from the states members of the League of Nations. The speeding-up of operations after General de Bono had been succeeded by Marshal Badoglio was certainly fully justified by the results.

At 5 a.m. on the 3rd October, 1935, the first detachments of the Italian forces in Eritrea crossed the Mareb and began their advance upon Adowa. In the course of the day there were air raids over Addi Grat and Adowa, and Addi Grat was occupied on the 4th October. During these first two days the advance met with little or no resistance, but a certain amount of opposition was encountered between Addi Grat and Adowa. The fighting was not of a serious nature, however, and when the Italians entered Adowa on the morning of the 6th October they found that the forces of Ras Seyum (of whose province Adowa was the capital) had retreated during the night. The capture of Adowa, therefore, could hardly be considered a glorious feat of arms, but the victory was held none the less to have avenged the disaster of the 1st March, 1896, and it was celebrated with great rejoicings throughout Italy.

When the three Army Corps—two 'national' and one African—which were engaged in the advance had reached the Adowa-Addi Grat line, a pause for consolidation was ordered, and the engineers and workmen who accompanied the troops set about the task of road building. This halt, which lasted some three weeks, gave an opportunity for the Italian High Command to harvest some of the fruits of the policy which had been followed by the Eritrean authorities and by Italian consuls in Abyssinia during recent years. The absence of any effective opposition from Ras Seyum lent some colour to the carefully prepared Italian version that the invasion was in the nature of a peaceful occupation of a country-side whose population was

eagerly awaiting liberation from their oppressors. In a proclamation which he had issued on the 3rd October, General de Bono had formally announced that the Italian troops had crossed the Mareb in order to ensure tranquillity to the population, and he had appealed to the people of the Tigre to remain calm and continue their normal occupations so far as possible. During the halt on the Adowa-Addi Grat line, further proclamations were issued announcing the abolition of slavery and the suspension of market duties and customs tolls in the occupied zone, and the troops were ordered to respect the personal liberty and the property of the natives and to pay generously for any supplies which they obtained from them.

Thanks either to these precautions or to the thoroughness with which the ground had been prepared by Italian propaganda, the inhabitants of the villages which were occupied by the Italians made no difficulties over surrendering to the invaders. The Italian accounts of the submission, day after day, of chiefs and their followers were perhaps exaggerated for home consumption (Addis Ababa denied the existence of many of the chiefs whose names were included in the Italian reports); but the defections during the first few weeks were apparently on an extensive scale. The most notable of the desertions from the Abyssinian cause in the early days of the war was that of Dejazmach Haile Selassie Gugsä, the Governor of the Eastern Tigre and a son-in-law of the Emperor.<sup>1</sup> He made his submission on the 10th October and was rewarded by his appointment as Ras of the Tigre—an appointment which was conferred on him by General de Bono, in the name of King Victor Emmanuel, on the 17th October. Another success of the Italian policy was the voluntary surrender of Axum. The Italian High Command had been anxious to avoid trampling upon the religious susceptibilities of the population by occupying by force of arms the holy city of Abyssinia, in which, according to the tradition, there still rested the Ark of the Covenant which had been brought from Jerusalem by the son of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. At the same time, the possession of the traditional centre of Abyssinian religious life was of considerable importance to the Italians, and significance was also attached to it

<sup>1</sup> Dejazmach Gugsä was said to have felt great resentment because he had been deprived of a considerable part of his patrimony on the death of his father Ras Gugsä Araia in 1932, and the appointment of Ras Seyum to the supreme command in the Tigre was believed to have been another cause of ill will on his part. Gugsä was a descendant of the Emperor John, and the members of the Tigrean Imperial family were traditionally jealous of the Shoan dynasty which now occupied the throne. It was in the hope of healing this breach that the Emperor Haile Selassie had given one of his daughters in marriage to Gugsä, but she had died before 1935.



because Axum had been the centre of religious celebrations for the Abyssinian victory in 1896. The deputation of priests, headed by their political and religious chief, the Nevraïd, who handed the keys of the city to General de Bono on the 15th October, therefore solved the problem in a manner highly satisfactory to the Italians.<sup>1</sup>

The extension of the Italian line westwards through Axum did not add to its strength, for the right flank would be exposed to attack and the communications with the base would be threatened until the country between Axum and the Sudan frontier had been cleared. It was in this sector that the Abyssinians were most active during this first pause in the Italian advance, and the forces under the command of Dejazmach Ayelu of Walkait succeeded in harassing their opponents and keeping them on the defensive by carrying out raids across the River Setit into Eritrea. Along the rest of the front the Abyssinians refrained from any initiative, and one of the principal difficulties of the Italian command lay in locating the whereabouts of the forces of Ras Seyum and Ras Kassa, who had fallen back before the Italian advance.<sup>2</sup>

On the 27th October patrols of troops belonging to the Eritrean Army Corps, which was holding the centre of the Italian line, began to move forward towards Makalle, but a general advance did not begin until the 3rd November. The Second Army Corps, on the right wing, did not advance with the centre and the left wing but remained in the region west of Axum. On the extreme left wing a column of Danakil under Italian officers, which was moving forward along the edge of the plateau, was severely harassed by Abyssinian forces under Dejazmach Kassa Sebhat, who laid a successful ambush near Azbi; but neither Ras Seyum nor Ras Kassa offered any opposition to the Italian advance, and all the inhabited centres along the line of march surrendered without resistance. Nevertheless, it took the Italian forces until the 8th November to cover the distance of about thirty-five miles to Makalle. Their progress was hindered by heavy rains—

<sup>1</sup> In this case, also, personal motives were probably not absent, for the hierarchy at Axum were said to have resented the religious policy of the Emperor Haile Selassie, who had made Addis Ababa the centre of the religious as well as the political administration of the country, and who had even been crowned in his capital instead of at Axum like all his predecessors.

<sup>2</sup> During the first weeks of the war Italian air reconnaissance seems to have proved much less useful than had been expected for the purpose of locating the enemy, but with further experience the difficulties of reconnaissance work in country which afforded excellent facilities for concealment were to a large extent overcome. At the same time, the Abyssinians, for their part, also profited by experience in learning the art of concealment—until their cover was made untenable for them by being drenched with poison gas (see p. 370, above).

unexpected at this season—which greatly complicated the transport problem.<sup>1</sup> The troops who occupied Makalle on the morning of the 8th November felt that they had vindicated the past once again, for in 1896 a small Italian garrison which had been left to hold Makalle had been obliged to capitulate at length after a gallant resistance.

By the 10th November the main body of the Italian forces had taken up their position on the line of hills to the south of Makalle. The next bound forward would presumably be calculated to carry the Italian army another forty miles to Amba Alagi. The Italian High Command believed that the Abyssinians had assembled in great strength in the neighbourhood of Amba Alagi, where they were occupying strongly entrenched positions, but General de Bono did not consider that it would be safe to attempt a further advance—which might incite the Abyssinians to risk a pitched battle and thus afford the Italians the opportunity of striking a decisive blow—until the ground which had been occupied already had been consolidated and the roads which were necessary in order to maintain communications with the rear had been constructed. Accordingly, there was another prolonged pause in the new position.

One of the first developments after the occupation of the line south of Makalle was the recall of General de Bono and the appointment of Marshal Badoglio, the Chief of the Italian General Staff, as High Commissioner and Commander-in-Chief in his place. In his telegram of the 16th November to General de Bono, Signor Mussolini remarked that his mission 'had been completed in extremely difficult circumstances' with the capture of Makalle. This statement might be interpreted to mean that the original appointment of General de Bono had been made from political motives—it being judged advisable for a prominent Fascist to be responsible for the operations which would wipe out the disgrace of 1896—and that it had always been the Duce's intention to replace him by a younger man as soon as Adowa and Makalle had been taken by the Italian forces. It was generally assumed, however, that the appointment of Marshal Badoglio, the most distinguished living Italian soldier, was not unconnected with the decision of the League of Nations to impose sanctions upon Italy as an aggressor.<sup>2</sup> If economic sanctions were even partially successful, it was obvious that time would become a factor of the greatest importance, and General de Bono's method of 'safety first' would not be suited to the changed conditions.

<sup>1</sup> According to one report, no wheeled transport was able to reach Makalle for three weeks after its occupation, and the garrison had to be supplied by aeroplane.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 212-4, above.

The arrival of Marshal Badoglio on the Northern Front in the last week of November<sup>1</sup> was not the signal for the resumption of the Italian advance—which appeared, indeed, to be precluded for the time being by the state of communications with the base in Eritrea (at the end of November the port of Massawa was said to be in a condition of hopeless congestion, and the organization of transport services chaotic). Signs were not lacking, however, that the new Italian commander did not intend to follow his predecessor's policy of giving the Italian invasion the appearance, as far as possible, of a peaceful colonial enterprise. Between the 3rd October, when Adowa and Addi Grat were bombed, and the recall of General de Bono on the 16th November the air arm in the north seems to have been employed almost exclusively on reconnaissance work, but on the 19th November bombs were dropped near Antalo, south of Makalle, on an Abyssinian encampment which received the Italian aeroplanes with machine-gun and rifle fire, and during the first ten days of December the town of Dessye<sup>2</sup> was twice bombed by aeroplanes from the base at Asab, and an air raid over Gondar was also reported. Marshal Badoglio also ordered that the inhabitants of the occupied zone, who had been permitted by General de Bono to retain the rifles which were their most cherished possessions, should be required to surrender them. These were indications that the new Commander-in-Chief did not think it worth while to conciliate the population—partly, perhaps, because he judged that those of the local chiefs who were likely to be won over to the Italian side by conciliatory methods had already made their submission.<sup>3</sup> In the light of after events, the abandonment

<sup>1</sup> Marshal Badoglio had visited Eritrea after the opening of hostilities, returning to Italy from Massawa on the 24th October. His report on the conditions obtaining on the Northern Front was therefore at the disposal of Signor Mussolini when he made his decision to recall General de Bono.

<sup>2</sup> The motive of the raids over Dessye was the presence of the Emperor Haile Selassie, who had arrived in the town on the 30th November. A few days earlier he had visited both the Northern and the Southern Front by aeroplane. After his arrival at Dessye, the Emperor gave orders that the troops should evacuate the town of Harrar (which was the site of a French and a Swedish hospital) in order that the foreigners and non-combatants in the town might be spared bombardment from the air. On the 2nd December the Abyssinian Government notified the League of Nations that Harrar was now an open town.

<sup>3</sup> An important surrender which was reported during the first three weeks of November was that of the Sultan of Biru, whose territory occupied a large part of the Danakil plain. The Sultan of Aussa, between the edge of the plateau and the borders of French Somaliland, was also said to have submitted, but this report was premature, and the Sultan continued to 'sit on the fence' until his capital was occupied by Italian troops (see p. 396, below), after which he made his formal submission.

of a policy of conciliation by the Italian High Command in November could be seen to have foreshadowed the adoption of the policy of frightfulness which reached its height in March and April 1936.

Meanwhile, before the arrival of Marshal Badoglio, an attempt had been made to close the gap in the Italian line between the right wing based on Adowa and Axum and the main body south of Makalle. Detachments of the Second Army Corps advanced early in November to occupy points at which the Takazye could be forded, and by the middle of the month the line was said to have been established continuously from the river to Makalle. In fact, however, the Italian forces seem to have consisted of no more than scattered outposts, and the nature of the country made it impossible to establish lateral communications behind the line. On the 8th December the occupation of Abbi Addi, the capital of the Tembyen, was announced, but the Italians were still far from being masters of the whole of that district of rugged heights, cliffs and ravines, where small bands of Abyssinians who know the country were able to elude capture without difficulty. The Italian reports spoke of the progress made in 'combing' and 'mopping up' the Tembyen, but the failure of these operations to achieve their purpose was proved by subsequent events.

During November there had been little Abyssinian activity except on the Italian right and left wings, and attacks on the centre of the Italian line had not been frequent. By the beginning of December, however, the Abyssinian forces on the Northern Front had been strengthened by the arrival of Ras Mulugeta—an Adowa veteran who was the Emperor's Minister for War—with detachments of the Imperial Guard, and this was apparently the signal for the adoption of more aggressive tactics. During the night of the 3rd–4th December a strong force of Abyssinians was reported to have attacked the Italian position at Shelikot, south of Makalle, but to have been repulsed, and during the next few days there was activity all along the front. The first really serious engagement of the war on the Northern Front began on the 15th December on the Italian right wing, where Abyssinian detachments belonging to the forces of Dejazmach Ayelu and of Ras Imru (the Governor of Gojam,<sup>1</sup> whose army had now made contact with that of Dejazmach Ayelu) crossed the Takazye in two places in an attempt to turn the Italian flank. An Italian outpost on the Takazye was driven back some fifteen miles

<sup>1</sup> Another revolt against Ras Imru, who had been appointed to succeed Ras Hailu on the latter's fall in 1932 (see p. 116, above), had broken out in Gojam after the beginning of the war, and the rebellion proved to be impossible to suppress when no considerable force could be spared from the front.

to the Dembegwina Pass, where hand-to-hand fighting took place, and the bitterness of the contest, which lasted for some days, was indicated by the official figure of the Italian casualties, in which the proportion of killed to wounded was nearly ten to one.<sup>1</sup> For the first time the Italian *communiqués* admitted a retreat, and the claim that the ground lost was recovered almost immediately does not seem to have been justified. The Abyssinians continued to press hard upon this sector, and by the turn of the year they were said to have regained possession of most of Southern Shire.

Meanwhile, on the 22nd December, the Abyssinians had also made a determined attempt to penetrate the centre of the Italian line near Abbi Addi in order to cut the communications between Makalle and the rear. The results of this attack were indecisive, but on the whole favourable to the Abyssinians. They succeeded in reoccupying Abbi Addi at a heavy loss, and gained control over the Adowa-Makalle road; and, while the road from Makalle to Addi Grat remained open, it was now threatened from both sides—for the forces of Dejazmach Kassa Sebhat were still at large to the north-east of Makalle.

Thus at the beginning of the new year the position of the Italian army on the Northern Front appeared to be unsatisfactory. It looked as though the army was immobilized by its own weight, and would have its work cut out if it was to hold the dangerous Makalle salient against continual 'pin-prick' attacks from the enemy—attacks which were likely to be particularly trying to European nerves in view of the high altitude. Many foreign observers concluded that Marshal Badoglio, even if he were not obliged to withdraw from Makalle, would certainly be unable to advance any further before the onset of the rains in May, and this belief was strengthened by a *communiqué* which was issued in Rome on the 30th December, at the close of a Cabinet meeting, in which stress was laid on the inevitability of occasional pauses even in colonial warfare.<sup>2</sup>

Events were to prove how far these prognostications were from the

<sup>1</sup> Between the 15th and the 17th December the Italians admitted the loss of 272 killed against only 29 wounded. The majority of the casualties were among the Askaris.

<sup>2</sup> At the end of January 1936, Signor Mussolini announced that 50,000 civilians would be sent out to push on with work on the roads so that they might remain in use during the rainy months. It was expected that roads linking up Massawa, Entisio, Adowa, Axum, Hauzien and Makalle would be completed and asphalted for protection against the rains before May. There were also rumours that stone buildings to house men and stores were being erected behind the lines at Makalle, and these reports of preparations for the rainy season were taken as an indication that no great advance was anticipated before the rains began, and that a complete victory during this first campaigning season was certainly not contemplated.

truth. Marshal Badoglio had made good use of the enforced pause on the Makalle lines not only in building roads but also in organizing the forces under his command—which were now augmented by the Third Army Corps of 'national' troops. When the Italians finally took the initiative again they proved to be at least the equals of the Abyssinians in mobility,<sup>1</sup> and as much their superiors in strategy as they were in armaments. From the second week of February 1936 onwards the Italians advanced with a rapidity which surpassed all expectations until they entered Addis Ababa in triumph on the 5th May.

During the first fortnight of January frequent encounters between patrols were reported from the Tembyen, and there was great Italian activity in the air. Large forces of Abyssinians were observed to be massing to the south of Makalle, and air bombardment was used to break up these concentrations. Early in January Ras Mulugeta occupied Amba Aradam—a mountain 9,000 feet high situated about twelve miles south of Makalle—and the bombardment of the northern slopes of the mountain by artillery, which had been brought up behind the Italian lines, did not disperse this force, which not only blocked the way for an Italian advance southwards towards Amba Alagi but was also in a position to support Ras Kassa and Ras Seyum in their operations in the Tembyen.

On the 19th January a battle began in the Tembyen which lasted until the 23rd January. The Italians and the Abyssinians agreed in reporting fierce fighting, but in other respects their versions were diametrically opposed. Either side claimed a complete victory and maintained that the losses of the enemy were enormous and its own losses negligible;<sup>2</sup> and circumstantial details which were published by the Abyssinians regarding the numbers of guns, rifles and machine-guns which had fallen into their hands were categorically denied by the Italians. It was not clear whether the initiative came from the Italians or from the Abyssinians—if from the former, it was probably

<sup>1</sup> Their mobility was not affected to any extent by rain, and several battles were fought and won in a downpour. The Italian engineers and labour corps were apparently successful in constructing roads which withstood the 'Little Rains', and after the resumption of the Italian advance the transport problem was also eased by an increasing use of aircraft for carrying supplies. The Abyssinians, on the other hand, who depended for their communications on primitive tracks, seem to have been seriously handicapped whenever there was a heavy fall of rain. In this respect, therefore, the climate proved unexpectedly to be an asset to the invaders rather than to the defenders of the country.

<sup>2</sup> The Italians admitted that their own casualties were over 700, but they claimed to have killed and wounded many thousand Abyssinians. A report from Addis Ababa put the number of Italians killed at 15,000.

in order to forestall an Abyssinian offensive—but there were repeated attacks and counter-attacks by both sides, and the fighting was reported to have been specially severe at the Warieu Pass, north of Abbi Addi, which was held by a detachment of Blackshirts. For the first time the Italian ‘national’ troops and not the African troops bore the brunt of the fighting, and in his *communiqués* Marshal Badoglio made the rather surprising claim that the engagement had ‘established the prestige of the Italian White combatants’. It appeared from the accounts given by both parties that if any ground was gained it was by the Abyssinians, and if this was so the battle must have left the forces of Ras Kassa and Ras Seyum even closer to the road from Makalle to the rear than they had been before. The persistence during the last week of January of reports that skirmishes were taking place north of Makalle appeared to indicate that the threat to the Italian communications was as serious as ever; yet in the second week of February Marshal Badoglio was able to use two Army Corps in operations south of Makalle and thus to give convincing proof of his belief that his lines of communication were not in any great danger. Moreover, it was significant that neither Ras Kassa nor Ras Seyum made any attempt to intervene in order to hamper the resumption of the Italian advance.

The fact that those two leaders had stood their ground in the Tembyen and that Ras Mulugeta had entrenched himself at Amba Aradam indicated an intention to make a determined attempt to check a further Italian advance. Whether this decision was dictated by the difficulty of preventing the dissolution of feudal armies which were being given no opportunity to fight—especially at a time when their *moral* was shaken by the news of serious reverses in the south<sup>1</sup>—or whether the long period of Italian inertia, reacting upon the ‘superiority complex’ which their previous encounters with Europeans had bred in the Amharans, had made them over-confident in their own strength, the massing of forces was bound to play into the hands of the Italians. In the battle of the Tembyen in January, the nature of the country and the fact that fighting was taking place between small bodies of Abyssinians and Italians over a relatively wide area restricted the Italian use of artillery and air bombardment and thus placed the opposing forces on a more equal footing; but at the battle of Amba Aradam in February the odds were heavily against Ras Mulugeta from the outset, and neither the difficult country, nor heavy rain, nor the gallant resistance of the Abyssinians interfered with the successful execution of Marshal Badoglio’s plans.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 405, below.

In preparation for an Italian advance Amba Aradam was subjected to intense bombardment from artillery and from the air during the first ten days of February, but the mountain—‘an intricate mass of caverns, valleys, peaks, crags and rugged ground’—afforded good cover to Ras Mulugeta’s men, and their commander apparently thought that he could hold the position.<sup>1</sup> When the Italian advance began on the 11th February, Ras Mulugeta did not realize, apparently, that Marshal Badoglio intended to attack him on both flanks, and he allowed himself to be surrounded. By the 15th February two Italian columns had made contact south of Amba Aradam, and on the evening of that day the Italian flag was hoisted on the topmost peak of the mountain by Blackshirts under the command of the Duke of Pistoia. Ras Mulugeta and the remnant of his army had fought their way through and were in full retreat towards the south while Italian aeroplanes bombed them remorselessly.

The Italians claimed that the Abyssinians lost some 20,000 men in this battle,<sup>2</sup> that Ras Mulugeta’s fighting strength was completely shattered and that in his retreat he abandoned stores and live-stock and even wounded. In a telegram to Signor Mussolini announcing the victory, Marshal Badoglio remarked that ‘the dead of Adowa, avenged at last, rest in peace’. The Abyssinians themselves declared that the retreat from Amba Aradam had been executed in good order and in time to avoid anything in the nature of a disaster, and that the greater part of Ras Mulugeta’s army was able to re-form south-west of Amba Aradam. Subsequent developments showed, however, that the Italian version must have been considerably nearer than the Abyssinian version to the truth. In fact, it appeared that Ras Mulugeta’s decision to hold Amba Aradam was the turning-point in Abyssinian fortunes. Whether the Italian advance could have been checked if the Abyssinians had executed a strategic retreat from Amba Aradam remains an open question; but, as it was, there seems

<sup>1</sup> Ras Mulugeta was said to be among the most conservative of the Abyssinian leaders, and the fact that he had fought at Adowa inclined him to look upon the Italians with contempt. Moreover, his army, consisting for the most part of the European-trained regulars who formed the Imperial Guard, was the best-armed Abyssinian force in the field, and the men as well as their leader may have felt it disgraceful to withdraw without resistance. It may be noted, however, that Vehib Pasha considered that the Western training received by the Imperial Guard had merely robbed them of their natural fighting qualities, and had made them less reliable in battle than the untrained irregulars and readier to take to flight in the face of the enemy (see a report in *The Manchester Guardian* of the 4th June, 1936, of interviews given by Vehib Pasha in Cairo in May 1936).

<sup>2</sup> The Italian losses were officially stated as 196 killed and 606 wounded. No African troops appear to have been used on this occasion by the Italians.



to be little doubt that the defeat of the Imperial Guard under Ras Mulugeta hastened the Abyssinians' disintegration by striking a shattering blow at their *moral*, as well as by enabling Marshal Badoglio to turn and dispose of the other Abyssinian armies which were threatening his flank. So far as there was any question of individual responsibility for the Abyssinian *débâcle*, a considerable share of that responsibility would appear to rest upon the shoulders of the 'die-hard' Minister for War.<sup>1</sup>

Marshal Badoglio did not despatch troops in pursuit of the retreating Abyssinians, but a few days after the occupation of Amba Aradam the First Army Corps began a cautious advance in the direction of Amba Alagi. This strong natural position was held in considerable force, and it was apparently the intention of the Abyssinians to hold up the Italian advance as long as possible at this point; but their forces included a large contingent of Gallas and members of other subject tribes who had been bought by the Italians, and who deserted to their paymasters before the Italian column reached Amba Alagi. This defection left the flank of the loyal troops exposed and made it impossible for them to hold their ground, and they withdrew without offering any opposition. Amba Alagi was occupied on the 28th February, 1936, by Italian troops, who thus regained on the eve of the anniversary of the Battle of Adowa the position which marked the southern limit of the Italian penetration of Abyssinia in 1895.

Meanwhile, the Third Italian Army Corps, which had shared with the First Army Corps the honours of the Battle of Amba Aradam, had moved westwards and by the 19th February it had occupied Gaëla, a village on the road running southwards from Abbi Addi. This meant that the main line of communication from the Emperor's headquarters at Dessyè to the Tembyen had passed under Italian control, and that Ras Kassa and Ras Seyum, who were still in the Tembyen with forces believed to amount to about 30,000 men, were hemmed in from three sides: on the south by the Third Army Corps, on the north-east by the Eritrean Army Corps, which had been left based on Hauzien to guard the communications from Makalle, and on the north-west by the Second Army Corps, which was still based on Adowa and Axum, and the Fourth Army Corps (consisting of new reinforcements). According to the Italian version, the Abyssinian leaders waited placidly in this trap for the next Italian move,

<sup>1</sup> Ras Mulugeta paid for his error with his life. Early in March it became known that he had died from pneumonia which he had contracted during the retreat.

and did not use the ten days' grace which Marshal Badoglio allowed them in order to make good their escape by the only route left open to them—westwards across the gorge of the Takazye into the still more rugged country of the Semyen. On the evening of the 27th February the three sides of the trap began to close in, and at the end of three days Marshal Badoglio announced another complete Italian victory. The Abyssinians were driven out of several strongly fortified posts which they held in the Tembyen<sup>1</sup> after fierce fighting, and they were heavily bombed as they made their way to the fords of the Takazye. Once again the Italians claimed to have killed thousands of the enemy and to have routed the remainder so completely that they even threw away their arms as they fled; and once again the Abyssinian version was that there had been no disaster but an orderly retreat, with rearguard actions which did not involve heavy losses.<sup>2</sup> The Italians, at any rate, had at length removed the 'Tembyen sore', and the extent to which the Abyssinians had suffered in the process was indicated by the fact that they made little or no attempt to harass the enemy any further. According to subsequent reports, a considerable proportion of the men who escaped from the Tembyen had lost any taste for fighting and slipped away in the direction of their homes. Ras Kassa and Ras Seyum, with the remnant of their forces, made their way southwards, and before the end of March they had established contact with the forces under the command of the Emperor in the neighbourhood of Lake Ashangi.<sup>3</sup>

The next Italian move was in Southern Shire, where the Second Army Corps were face to face with the forces of Ras Imru and Dejazmach Ayelu. These two leaders, who were still holding the region west of Axum, showed a greater capacity for guerrilla warfare than the other Abyssinian generals on the Northern Front, and they had recently been making their presence felt with considerable effect.

In the last week of February Ras Imru—acting, apparently, on the instructions of the Emperor, in the hope of relieving the pressure

<sup>1</sup> The most remarkable episode was the Italian capture of Amba Warkamba, a commanding position near Abbi Addi. One side of this mountain was left undefended by the Abyssinians in the belief that it could not be climbed, but a detachment of Alpini and rock-climbing Blackshirts succeeded in scaling the cliff and took the defenders completely by surprise.

<sup>2</sup> The opinion was expressed at Addis Ababa that the Italians had greatly exaggerated the importance of their success in the Tembyen in order to impress the statesmen who were about to assemble in Geneva to examine the question of applying further sanctions to Italy. The Committee of Eighteen met on the 2nd March, 1936, but postponed the consideration of oil sanctions pending the result of an appeal for the suspension of hostilities (see pp. 337-9, above).

<sup>3</sup> See p. 396, below.

on the Tembyen—had despatched flying columns which had executed two daring and successful raids behind the Italian lines, on the road between Adowa and Asmara. One column was reported to have captured an Italian fortified post and blown up an ammunition dump, while the other ambushed a detachment of White troops. A few days earlier Dejazmach Ayelu, after a long period of inactivity, had succeeded in surprising the Italian post at Om Ager, on the Setit, close to the frontier of the Sudan, and had also destroyed an ammunition dump. He had then moved east again and joined forces once more with Ras Imru.

At the conclusion of the second battle of the Tembyen, the Second Italian Army Corps and the Fourth Army Corps converged on Ras Imru and Dejazmach Ayelu from the east and the north, and after some three days of fighting, in which the Italians made considerable use of poison gas, the Abyssinians retreated across the Takazye with heavy losses. By the end of the first week in March<sup>1</sup> the Second Army Corps were said to be holding the fords of the Takazye and to be engaged in 'combing' the whole area down to the river. The most remarkable feature of this Battle of Southern Shire was that the Fourth Army Corps, which was advancing southwards over ground so rough that mechanical transport was out of the question, was supplied entirely by aeroplane throughout the operations.

The Battle of Southern Shire completed—apparently at an insignificant loss to the Italians<sup>2</sup>—the strategical plan which had begun with the advance on Amba Aradam on the 11th February, and the success of this plan placed Marshal Badoglio in a favourable position of which he took full advantage. In the north-west the defeat of Ras Imru and Dejazmach Ayelu opened the way for an advance towards Lake Tana. This was prepared for by air raids over Gondar and other centres and was carried out with remarkable rapidity and without encountering any resistance. By the middle of March Italian troops had crossed the River Takazye and were 'combing' the eastern

<sup>1</sup> On the 8th March Signor Mussolini notified his acceptance in principle of the proposal for negotiations which had been made by the Committee of Thirteen on the 3rd March (see p. 338, above). On the same day it was reported that Marshal Badoglio had given orders for the cessation of all hostilities while the peace negotiations were in progress, but on the following day this report was contradicted. It appeared that Marshal Badoglio had in fact received instructions from Rome to suspend operations, but that these orders were countermanded when the news of Herr Hitler's *coup* in the Rhineland was received.

<sup>2</sup> The official Italian figures of casualties during the second Battle of the Tembyen and the Battle of Southern Shire were 292 killed and rather more than 1,000 wounded.

slopes of the Semyen *massif*, while another force had entered Walkait across the River Setit from Eritrea. Ras Imru and Dejazmach Ayelu did not attempt to oppose this advance, but withdrew southwards, and by the end of March practically the whole of Walkait was under Italian occupation. In the middle of March a column consisting of 5,000 men in 500 motor-vehicles, led by Signor Starace, the Secretary of the Fascist Party, had left Asmara for a dash on Gondar. This column crossed the Setit at Om Ager, and followed the Sudan border as far as Nogara, whence it struck south-eastwards towards Gondar. The lorries were left behind at the Chercher Pass, about fifteen miles from the goal, which the troops entered on foot on the 1st April. Signor Starace had apparently encountered no resistance whatever, but even so his achievement was a remarkable one, since he had traversed some 340 miles of difficult country, in great heat, in just over a fortnight. Another column, consisting of Eritrean troops, had started to advance on Gondar from the Takazyé early in March. This force skirted the north-western slopes of the Semyen—receiving supplies by air—and reached Gondar by way of Debarech and Dabat just after Signor Starace. In the absence of any resistance, it was not difficult to extend the occupation south and west from Gondar. On the 12th April the Italian flag was hoisted on the northern shore of Lake Tana, and on the same day the customs port of Gallabat on the Sudan border was occupied. The establishment of Italian troops on the shores of Lake Tana was an event of potential political importance, in view of British interests in that region, while the occupation of Gallabat cut one of the possible routes for the supply of munitions to the Abyssinians. On the 26th April the occupation of the Lake Tana zone was said to have been completed by the entry of Italian troops into Barda Giorgis at the southern end of the lake. Other detachments of the Second and Fourth Army Corps were engaged during April in completing the work of 'mopping up' the Tembyen and in extending the Italian occupation over the vast territory between the Sudan border and the Takazyé which had been left untouched by the thrust towards Gondar. The Italian reports indicated that this task was proving less difficult than had appeared probable in view of the nature of the country, owing to the withdrawal of Ras Imru's and Dejazmach Ayelu's forces and the voluntary submission of the local population.

Meanwhile, the Italian First and Third Army Corps had been making rapid progress southwards down the eastern side of the plateau. By the second week of March the First Army Corps, together with detachments of the Eritrean Corps, was advancing

along the edge of the plateau from Amba Alagi towards Lake Ashangi, while the Third Army Corps moved down the caravan route from Abbi Addi towards Sokota—an important centre at the junction of caravan routes from the Tembyen on the north, Addis Ababa on the south, Dessye on the south-east and the Lake Tana and Gojam districts on the west. This corps had reached Fenaroa before the middle of March and Sokota by the end of the month. The main Abyssinian army was situated south of Lake Ashangi, under the command of the Emperor himself, who had left his headquarters at Dessye after Ras Mulugeta's defeat at Amba Aradam and had come north in the hope of rallying his forces. During March there were ominous reports of desertions from the army by groups of semi-starved men who took to plundering where they could, and the troops who remained loyal were greatly harassed by the activities of tribesmen who had gone over to the Italians; for these deserters were now much better armed than their former comrades, and their knowledge of the country enabled them to do much damage to the Abyssinian cause. Moreover, the demoralization of the Abyssinians was greatly increased by the Italian use of poison gas.<sup>1</sup> The occasional use by the Italians of the methods of chemical warfare had been reported by the Abyssinians from various quarters since the end of December 1935, and in March 1936 intensive gas bombing was employed on the Northern Front to break the Abyssinian resistance. In particular, mustard gas (yperite) was dropped in containers or sprayed from the wings of aeroplanes over combatants and non-combatants alike, as well as over the undergrowth which might afford cover to the Abyssinians. Against this terrible weapon the Abyssinians were entirely without defence, and it was to their credit that they were not so completely demoralized by it as to be incapable of striking a last desperate blow.

Towards the end of March, the Emperor's position near Kworam was threatened by the two Italian columns which were advancing on Lake Ashangi and on Sokota, and there was also the possibility that his line of retreat might be cut off from the south-east. Since October little or nothing had been heard of the activities of the Italian force which was supposed to be operating in the Danakil Depression,<sup>2</sup> but at the end of March 1936 the Italian *communiqués* announced that a column had advanced across the almost waterless desert from Asab and had entered Sardo, the capital of the Sultanate of Aussa, on the 11th March. Sardo was only about one hundred

<sup>1</sup> See also p. 370, above, and pp. 413-4, below.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 381, above.

miles from Dessye and the same distance from the railway, and although the nature of the country made it improbable that the Italians would be able to deliver a sudden thrust from Sardo, the establishment of an air base in that town—which was believed to be the main object of the move—would enable them to make even greater use than before of the air arm on the Northern Front.

Marshal Badoglio afterwards placed it on record that he had intended to attack the Abyssinian army south of Lake Ashangi on the 5th April—using, presumably, the ‘pincers’ movement which had already proved so successful in the north. He was, however, forestalled by the Emperor, who moved north with some 20,000 men from Kworam and struck at the First Italian Army Corps just above Lake Ashangi on the 31st March. The Emperor was obviously in a position in which he must either fight or make good his retreat without delay, and it is possible that he decided on the forlorn hope of an attack because he was aware that the demoralization of his army would be completed by a retreat. Many observers, however, believed that Haile Selassie was overruled by his Rases, who refused to withdraw and adopt guerrilla tactics. At all events, the decisive action in the war was opened on Abyssinian initiative. The attack on the 31st March centred on the village of Mai Chio, a few miles north of Lake Ashangi. At first the Abyssinians had some success, and they displayed the greatest gallantry in their repeated attacks in the face of a withering fire from the Italian machine-guns. The Emperor himself took part in the fighting, and was said to have fired a machine-gun for two days without sleep. The fighting lasted until the 4th April, for although the Abyssinians had no chance of victory after the first day they held their ground with remarkable tenacity against the Italian artillery and air bombardment. On the 3rd April the Abyssinian forces withdrew in good order to a line of hills a few miles from the shores of the lake, but they were finally routed when the Italians counter-attacked on the 4th April. The remnant of the Emperor’s army fled in disorder down the road to Dessye, harassed by the Italian aircraft and by the attacks of rebellious tribes along the road.<sup>1</sup>

The decisive defeat of the Emperor and his guard removed the last effective obstacle from the way of Marshal Badoglio’s advance. In commenting on the Battle of Lake Ashangi to press correspondents,

<sup>1</sup> The Imperial Guard was able to fight occasional rearguard actions against rebellious Gallas, and in the middle of April an Abyssinian force was reported to have surprised and routed an Eritrean contingent south-west of Lake Ashangi.

the Marshal remarked that the Abyssinian defeat was such as to allow him 'to conceive and execute the most daring plans'; and this proved to be no idle boast. On the 5th April, the day after the Abyssinian retreat began, the Italians entered Kworam. That town was the starting-point of a motor-road to Dessye and Addis Ababa, the existence of which would obviously greatly facilitate the Italian advance. The Italian engineers, keeping pace with the advancing troops, had already constructed a serviceable road for transport lorries as far south as Mai Chio, and it only remained to continue that road to Kworam in order to allow the Italian army to sweep forward towards the capital.

The First Army Corps and the Eritrean detachments resumed their advance after a short pause,<sup>1</sup> and Dessye was occupied at dawn on the 15th April by Eritrean troops who had left Kworam on the 9th April and who had obtained their supplies on the way from the air. They met with practically no resistance, and the town of Dessye was not defended, although the Abyssinian Crown Prince had remained there until the Italian advance-guard was almost within sight. Marshal Badoglio established his headquarters at Dessye on the 21st April. A few days earlier the Eritrean Army Corps had begun to advance on Addis Ababa by the more westerly, and shorter, of the two main routes from Dessye to the capital, and by the 27th April detachments of the First Army Corps had set out in motor lorries on the eastern road by way of Ankober.

During April Addis Ababa was frequently visited by Italian aeroplanes, which did not indeed drop bombs upon the town (though on one occasion machine-gun fire was directed against the aerodrome in the neighbourhood) but which added to the strain upon the nerves of the native population and of the considerable number of foreigners who were among the inhabitants of the capital. During the second half of the month men who had been with the armies on the Northern Front were straggling back to Addis Ababa, and their condition and the accounts which they gave of the situation deepened the general gloom. Nevertheless, foreign observers in Addis Ababa appear to have received the impression that there was every prospect of the Emperor's continuing the struggle, and that his cause was not yet altogether hopeless. Even after the news from Geneva in the middle of April<sup>2</sup> made it clear that no help was to be expected from

<sup>1</sup> At the end of the first week in April, the Third Army Corps was also reported to have begun to advance southwards from Sokota towards Magdala, but the occupation of Magdala had not been reported before the First Army Corps reached Addis Ababa.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 345 *seqq.*, above.

that quarter at the eleventh hour, the Government continued to make plans for further resistance. On the 19th April a proclamation was issued ordering the whole male population, except the physically unfit, to report for military service, and attempts were made to check the Italian advance upon Addis Ababa by destroying the roads from Dessye. The work of destruction was carried out hurriedly under the menace of air bombardment, and the damage done was not so serious as to be beyond repair by the Italian engineers. There were also reports that detachments of Abyssinian soldiers had been despatched to hold the passes through the mountains, but when the Italians reached these points there were no Abyssinian defenders to be dealt with.<sup>1</sup>

During the last few days of April the Government at Addis Ababa were reported to be making plans to retire towards the west and organize continued opposition to the Italians from a new centre. On the last day of April the Emperor returned to his capital, accompanied by Ras Kassa and other leading generals. On the 29th April the Italians had at last succeeded in breaking through the 'Hindenburg Line' in the south,<sup>2</sup> and by the time when the Emperor arrived at Addis Ababa, the army of Dejazmach Nasibu—the only considerable Abyssinian force which had not yet experienced defeat—was in full retreat. Nevertheless, Haile Selassie told foreign press correspondents on the 30th that he intended to fight to the end, and that the occupation of Addis Ababa by the Italians would not compel him to surrender. On the 1st May he issued a final appeal calling upon every available man to take arms and march northwards in a last attempt to bar Marshal Badoglio's progress. This appeal, apparently, elicited little or no response. During the retreat from Lake Ashangi the Emperor had had personal experience of the extent to which the Abyssinian cause was being betrayed by what was false within, for he had had more than one narrow escape from capture or death at the hands of his own rebellious subjects turned brigands. Ideas of treachery had also, apparently, been gaining ground among Haile Selassie's immediate entourage since the fall of Dessye.<sup>3</sup> The failure of his appeal for volunteers on the 1st May seems finally to have broken his will to resist—coming, as it did, when he was

<sup>1</sup> At the end of April 6,000 Abyssinians were reported to be holding a pass on Mount Tarmaber, but when the Italians arrived they found only a few hundred men under the command of a Swedish officer, and these were easily dispersed.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 408, below.

<sup>3</sup> A statement to this effect was made by Commandant de Bois, a Belgian officer who had served on the Emperor's General Staff (see *The Times*, 9th May, 1936).



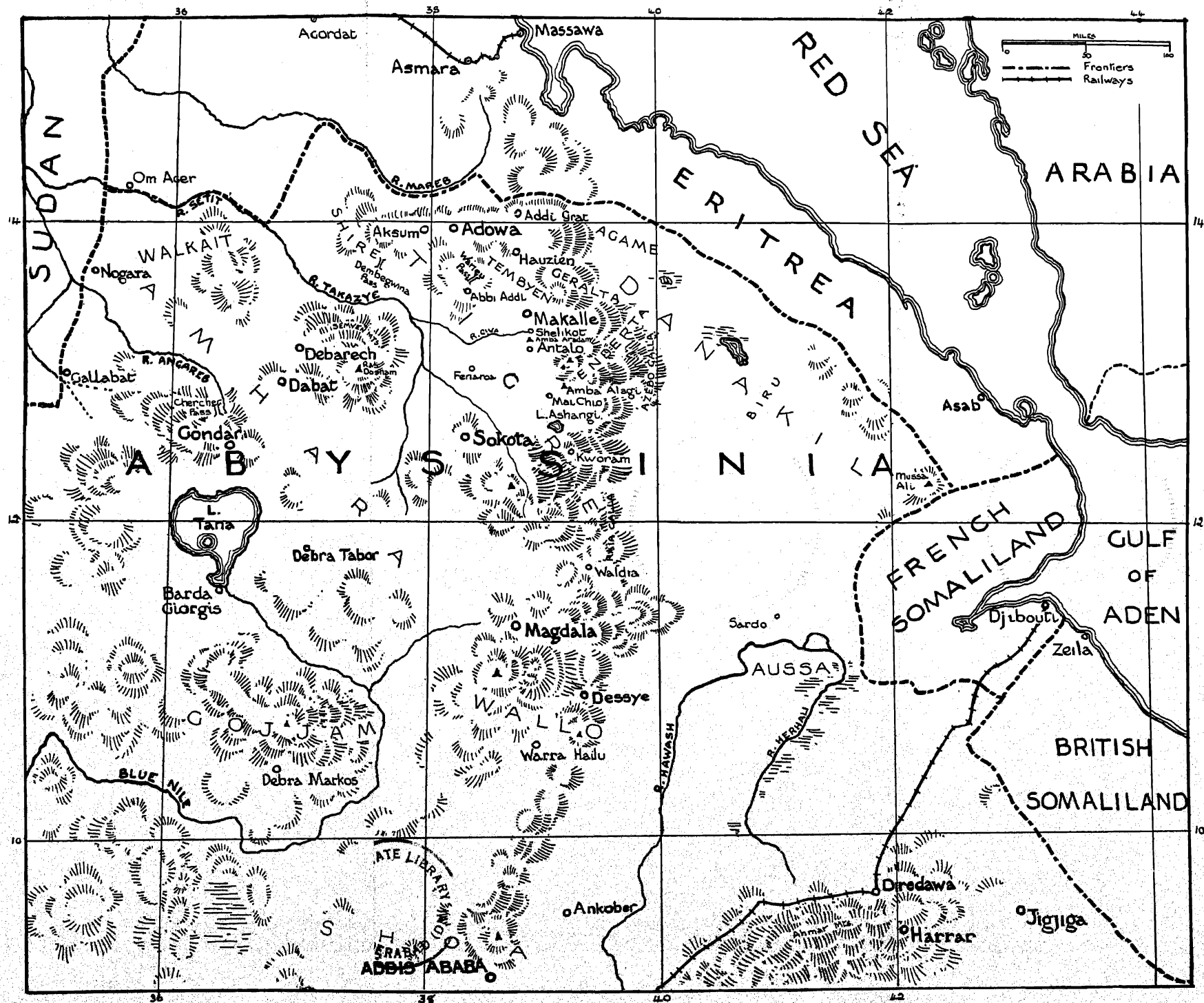
staggering under the tremendous strain to which he had been exposed for many months and which had culminated in his experiences since the 4th April—and in addition it was represented to him that the Galla tribes, through whose territory the line of retreat westwards lay, were hostile to him. The Emperor had already arranged for the Empress and other members of his family to leave the country, and almost at the last moment he decided to accompany them. His decision to renounce the direction of affairs was conveyed to the British Minister, Sir Sidney Barton, on the evening of the 1st May, and early on the morning of the 2nd May Haile Selassie, accompanied by his wife and family, his Foreign Minister (Bilatengeta Herouy), Ras Kassa and a number of other notables, left Addis Ababa by train for Djibouti.<sup>1</sup>

One of the Emperor's last orders was that his palace should be thrown open in order that the people of Addis Ababa might help themselves to its contents; and as soon as his departure became known an orgy of burning, looting and rioting began which lasted for three days and which was said to have cost the lives of more than five hundred persons, including some foreigners.<sup>2</sup> The foreign members of the population for the most part took refuge in one or other of the Legations, but these were not exempt from attack. The American and Turkish Legations had eventually to be evacuated and their occupants given asylum in the grounds of the British Legation, outside the town, where an adequate system of defence had been organized in preparation for such an emergency. Other Legations also availed themselves of the help of the detachment of Sikhs who had been drafted to Addis Ababa some time previously in order to reinforce the British Legation guard. At the time of the Emperor's departure, Eritrean troops who had been advancing along the western road were within easy reach of the capital, but Marshal Badoglio did not consider it advisable that African troops should be the first to enter the town, and the mechanized detachments of the First National Army Corps who were following the eastern route could not make such rapid progress owing to the bad condition of the road. The French Government were reported to have appealed to the Italian Government, in view of the disorders in Addis Ababa, for the earliest possible occupation of the city by the Italian army; but it was not until the afternoon of the 5th May, 1936, that Marshal

<sup>1</sup> See p. 357, above.

<sup>2</sup> Among the foreign victims was Dr. Melly, the leader of the British ambulance unit. Dr. Melly was wounded by rioters while attempting to carry out rescue work, and succumbed to his wounds some days later.

# ABYSSINIA: NORTHERN CAMPAIGN



Badoglio, riding at the head of detachments of national and African troops, made his triumphal entry into the Abyssinian capital after a campaign which had lasted almost exactly seven months.

(d) THE CAMPAIGN IN THE SOUTH

The small force under General Graziani's command in the south began its operations under conditions very different from those in the north. In this country of sand and scrub full use could be made of mechanical transport so long as the dry weather held, but the heavy rains which recurred at intervals from the middle of October turned the desert into a swamp and greatly hampered the Italian progress. Owing to the more open nature of the country, it was possible to make even greater use of the air arm in the south than in the north, and from the beginning General Graziani showed no hesitation in preparing for the advance of his infantry by intensive bombardments from the air.<sup>1</sup>

The principal objective of the Italian army on the Southern Front was the occupation of Harrar, the most important town in Abyssinia after Addis Ababa, and at the beginning of the war there seemed reason to expect that General Graziani would be able with relative ease to advance rapidly northwards until he reached Harrar and the railway. General Graziani was hampered, however, by the weather, by the smallness of the forces at his disposal and by the length of his lines of communication with his bases at Mogadiscio and at Bandar Qasim.<sup>2</sup> He was obliged to operate by means of separate columns, which had great difficulty in keeping in contact with one another along a front extending for about four hundred miles from the borders of British Somaliland to the borders of Kenya, and which might find if they advanced too rapidly that Abyssinian forces had slipped in between and severed their communications with the rear. The main body of the Abyssinian army in the south was concentrated round Harrar and Jigjiga, under the command of Dejazmach Nasibu (who had the assistance of an experienced Turkish General, Vehib Pasha); but as soon as the Italian army moved forward to engage Dejazmach Nasibu, its flank would be exposed to attack from the highlands of Bale, where Ras Desta Demtu, another of the Emperor's sons-in-law, was in command of a large force.

When the Italian army in the south began its advance simul-

<sup>1</sup> According to Vehib Pasha the intensive air bombardment did relatively little damage, owing to the absence of large buildings for targets, and the Abyssinian troops became so accustomed to it that it was difficult to make them take cover when aeroplanes appeared overhead.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 368, above.

taneously with the army in the north, it was apparently divided into four main columns. In the north-east of the Ogaden a detachment which moved parallel with the frontier of British Somaliland made rapid progress at first in the direction of Jigjiga. The object of this column, presumably, was to cut the caravan route from Berbera which was used for the transport of munitions, but its advance was soon brought to a standstill—probably by the absence of water—and little subsequent activity was reported, except by the air arm,<sup>1</sup> along the British Somaliland frontier. At the opposite end of the line, Dolo—a town close to the Kenya frontier which was already half Italian and half Abyssinian—was occupied immediately, in order to hold Ras Desta in check and serve as a base for operations along the rivers Web, Ganale Doria and Dawa (which together formed the Juba in Italian Somaliland). In the centre, detachments—operating, apparently, from Walwal—were reported to have taken Gerlogubi within a day or two of the beginning of the forward movement, while the fourth column began operations along the rivers Webi Shebeli and Fafan—the second of which offered the most direct line of advance to Harrar.

It was in this Webi Shebeli-Fafan sector that activity was greatest during the first weeks of the war in the south. The first important Italian objective was the post of Gorahai on the Fafan, which commanded a valuable line of wells and was also a junction of caravan routes, and where an Abyssinian force under the command of Gerazmach Afework was strongly entrenched. The Abyssinian posts along the Webi Shebeli and the Fafan were subjected to repeated bombardment from the air during October, but the advance of the infantry was held up by the rains. By the end of October, however, the whole of the angle between the Webi Shebeli and the Fafan south of Gorahai was said to be in the hands of the Italians, who had beaten back an Abyssinian advance down the Webi Shebeli, and who had captured—not without bitter resistance—a number of minor forts which gave them control of all the approaches to Gorahai. During the first week of November intensive bombing was carried out in preparation for the final assault. The death of Gerazmach Afework from wounds received during an air raid finally broke the defenders' nerve, and they fled before the advancing Italian troops, who entered the town without resistance on the 7th November (the day before the troops on the Northern Front occupied Makalle).

<sup>1</sup> A big consignment of munitions from Berbera was said to have been destroyed by bombs at the beginning of November 1935.

This Italian success was of considerable significance, for Gorahai was the first town on either front which had been taken in spite of an apparent intention on the part of the Abyssinians to hold it as long as possible, and the moral effect of the air bombardment which had won an almost bloodless victory for the Italians might be expected to be far-reaching. Dejazmach Nasibu's army were reported to have been considerably disheartened by the fall of Gorahai, but a visit which the Emperor paid to the Southern Front towards the end of November did much to restore the army's *moral*. The occupation of Gorahai appeared to leave the way free for a rapid Italian advance up the Fafan as far as the hills south of Jigjiga and Harrar, where the Abyssinians were expected to make a stand; but the Italians were not able to follow up their success at Gorahai by an advance in force.

The principal Abyssinian posts between Gorahai and Dejazmach Nasibu's head-quarters at Jigjiga were Sasa Baneh<sup>1</sup> and Daggah Bur, and both of these had already been bombed several times. A few days after the fall of Gorahai a report was in circulation that the Italian troops had already advanced more than a hundred miles from Gorahai and taken both Sasa Baneh and Daggah Bur; but though advance patrols may have visited one or both places, no attempt seems to have been made to hold either of them. On the 11th November the Abyssinians won a considerable success at Anale, some thirty miles south of Daggah Bur, where a number of tanks were successfully ambushed; and during the second half of November a good deal of spasmodic fighting took place in the country between Anale and Gorahai. At the end of the month came the news that the Italians had withdrawn all along the line. The Italian withdrawal seems to have been due largely to the fact that the Somali 'dubats' belonging to General Graziani's African division were demoralized by their defeat at Anale, but it could also be explained partly by the return of the rains, which immobilized mechanical transport and made it impossible for the troops in advanced posts to be kept adequately supplied, and partly by the development of the Abyssinian threat from the south-west.

Ras Desta had hitherto remained inactive, and had taken no steps to divert Italian attention from the drive northwards; but towards the end of November he was reported to be marching on Dolo, with the object of occupying the zone between the Webi Shebeli and the

<sup>1</sup> A road between Sasa Baneh and Jigjiga had recently been constructed by Swiss engineers, and this provided easy access to the foot-hills south of Harrar.

Kenya frontier and threatening the communications of the Italian force operating along the Fafan. Ras Desta's advance guard had apparently been driven back by Italian troops before the end of November, but the Italians did not make any counter-advance. The air arm continued to be active, however, and in the middle of December the main body of Ras Desta's troops was said to have been located between one hundred and twenty and one hundred and fifty miles north-west of Dolo, and an air attack took place near Negelli, while Daggah Bur was subjected to almost daily bombing. This prolonged pause enabled General Graziani to bring up reinforcements which had been despatched to him from Libya and Italy, and by the turn of the year there were two divisions at Dolo or in the immediate neighbourhood. The delay also gave the Italian commander an opportunity to organize the local tribes who had declared for Italy. The Webi Shebeli valley had always been a source of trouble to the Government at Addis Ababa—it was here that the former Emperor Lij Yasu had made his longest stand after he had been deprived of his throne—and it was not surprising that several of the Muslim chiefs, the most important of whom was the Sultan of Olol-Dinle, should have gone over to the Italian side.

In the second half of December African auxiliaries had begun to move up the Webi Shebeli towards Imi, where Dejasmach Bayenna Marede, the Governor of Bale, had been stationed for some weeks with a camel corps and the Bale levy. On Christmas Day an engagement took place at Gabba on the Webi Shebeli between an Abyssinian force and the Sultan of Olol-Dinle, in which the Abyssinians were apparently driven off after severe fighting. A week later Danan, a village on the Bawa (an affluent of the Webi Shebeli), which was situated about sixty miles west of Gorahai and was an important road centre, was occupied after a stiff resistance by another chief who had gone over to the Italians, Husayn Haile of the Ogaden rer Dala whose forces were then joined by those of the Sultan of Olol-Dinle. About a week later, however, Dejasmach Bayenna Marede scored a success at Karanli, near Imi, where he beat off a frontal attack upon his position.

Meanwhile, General Graziani had begun preparations for a drive against Ras Desta in the region between the rivers Ganale Doria and Dawa, where air reconnaissances revealed the presence of a considerable Abyssinian force, whose advance-guard was reported to be within forty miles of Dolo. Amino on the Ganale Doria was occupied by Italian troops at the beginning of January 1936, and during the next ten days there were several engagements between outposts, as well

as intense air activity along the rivers Ganale Doria and Web.<sup>1</sup> On the 12th January the Italians began an advance in force—the main body moving forward between the two rivers while a detachment on the right bank of the Ganale Doria carried out an outflanking movement.

Ras Desta, who had taken his time over his descent from the highlands to threaten General Graziani's rear, now appears to have lingered too long in territory where his opponents could make full use of their superiority in armaments and in means of transport, and where, moreover, he was experiencing great difficulty in obtaining provisions for his army.<sup>2</sup> The Abyssinians put up a stout resistance against the attack of Somali 'dubats', and for some two days they fought gallantly to maintain their position on the high ground between the rivers, fighting stubborn rear-guard actions as they slowly withdrew. When the attacking Somalis were reinforced by Askaris and Italian national troops the resistance was broken, and the withdrawal of the Abyssinians was apparently turned into a rout by the appearance of tanks in their rear.<sup>3</sup> They were subjected to heavy bombardment from the air as they beat a hasty retreat into the Sidamo foot-hills, where tanks and lorries could not follow them, while the Italians exploited their success by a rapid advance along the caravan-road from Dolo to Negelli. Mechanized detachments reached Negelli, two hundred and forty miles from their starting-point, on the 20th January.

The defeat of Ras Desta was apparently decisive; and although the Italian claim to have killed or wounded 10,000 of the enemy during the advance to Negelli was probably exaggerated, the Abyssinian version—which was that only a small detachment of Ras Desta's army was routed, the main body having withdrawn voluntarily and in good order to the hills in order to establish a better line of defence—was much further from the truth. The occupation of Negelli opened up a comparatively short and direct route by which the Italian army might reach Addis Ababa. This possibility was not exploited, but General Graziani's victory over Ras Desta removed the threat to his flank and to his communications and set him free to concentrate his main efforts on the advance northwards as soon

<sup>1</sup> During the nine days preceding the occupation of Negelli there were said to have been 141 bombing raids over the town.

<sup>2</sup> A member of the Swedish ambulance unit which accompanied Ras Desta's army (and which had been bombed near Dolo on the 30th December—see p. 411, below) was said to have reported that the men were dying of starvation, and that desertion constituted a serious problem.

<sup>3</sup> Abyssinian cavalry were said to have charged the tanks repeatedly.

as conditions permitted; and it also served an immediate political end. This sector had offered the best hope of obtaining a success which could be used to counteract the depressing effects upon the Italian public of the prolonged halt in the north;<sup>1</sup> and the rejoicings in Italy which greeted the news of General Graziani's victory showed that this Italian advance in the south-west, whatever its strategical importance might be, had certainly served its purpose politically. On the 23rd January Italian flying columns occupied Wadara, about forty miles north-west of Negelli, but General Graziani showed no disposition to venture farther north than this, and he concentrated his attention on the task of consolidating the Italian hold over the country between Dolo and Negelli. A column advancing westwards along the Dawa was reported to have reached Malka Murri, one hundred and thirty miles from Dolo, before the end of January, and to have fought two engagements on the way. By the beginning of February an advance was in progress up the Web, the most easterly of the three rivers, and Lamma Shilindi, fifty miles from Dolo, had been reached by the 5th February. The control of the valley of the Web was necessary to forestall an attack on the Italian flank in the Dolo sector from Dejazmach Bayenna Mared at Imi, who, according to a report from Addis Ababa, had succeeded in inflicting another defeat on an Italian column during the first days of February.<sup>2</sup> On the 11th February the Italians attacked an Abyssinian camp at Mount Jigo, near Imi, but here again they were unsuccessful, and after another engagement on the Web, about twenty miles from Lamma Shilindi, a few days later, the attempt to drive back the Abyssinian forces from the salient between the Dolo and the Ogaden sectors seems to have been temporarily abandoned.

While the Italians were engaged in 'mopping up' operations in the region of the three rivers, detachments of Dejazmach Nasibu's army had moved down from the north, and on the 10th February the Abyssinians had regained possession of Kurati, a village fifty miles south-east of Sasa Baneh, which had been abandoned by the Abyssinians during the dry season, and which had apparently been occupied by the Italians in December. The Abyssinians gained other small successes by attacking Italian outposts, and for some weeks General Graziani remained on the defensive, while Italian workmen in his

<sup>1</sup> See p. 388, above

<sup>2</sup> The Abyssinians claimed that the Italians left 1,700 dead (most of them Blackshirts) on the field, and that they had captured sixteen tanks and three field-guns as well as machine-guns.



rear were straining every nerve to improve his communications.<sup>1</sup> By the time when the Italian advance was resumed at the end of March Dejazmach Nasibu and Vehib Pasha had greatly strengthened their defensive position across the road to Jigjiga and Harrar. Taking advantage of the rugged hill country, where patches of bare rock alternated with thick scrub, they had constructed a line of defence—which came to be known as their ‘Hindenburg Line’—consisting of deep entrenchments with redoubts and machine-gun posts. This line linked up Daggah Modo, Daggah Bur, Sasa Baneh and Bulale, and presented a formidable obstacle to the Italian advance. In preparation for a forward movement on the ground there was intense air activity during the second half of March. The towns and villages in the foot-hills were subjected to repeated bombardment, Jigjiga was heavily bombed on four successive days from the 22nd to the 25th March, while Harrar itself—which had been proclaimed an open town in December 1935<sup>2</sup>—was attacked by nearly forty aeroplanes with incendiary and explosive bombs and machine-gun fire on the 29th March and a large part of the town was destroyed.<sup>3</sup>

By the end of March Italian troops were reported to have begun their advance up the valleys of the Webi Shebeli and the Fafan, but it was not until the middle of April that serious fighting took place. A force of Abyssinians under the command of a brother of Ras Desta was holding a strong position at Janagobo, whence it threatened the Italian left wing which was advancing up a tributary of the Webi Shebeli from Danan. On the 14th April the Italians launched an attack at Janagobo, and after three days of severe fighting the Abyssinians were driven back. This Italian column then resumed its advance towards Daggah Modo, and on the 23rd April the defenders of Daggah Modo were routed as the result of a surprise attack by Italian motorized troops. This success gave the Italians possession of the western end of the ‘Hindenburg Line’, but the other columns which were converging on Sasa Baneh continued to meet with strong resistance. The Abyssinians seem to have come out to meet the advancing enemy, and a battle was reported to have begun on the 18th April rather more than a hundred miles south of Sasa Baneh. The Abyssinians fell back on their fortified line, and between the 23rd and the 25th April fighting was said to have been practically continu-

<sup>1</sup> In the middle of March more than 30,000 Italian workmen were reported to be engaged on the construction of a permanent road, raised above the level of the desert, from Mogadiscio to Gorahai.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 386, footnote 2, above.

<sup>3</sup> A second raid over Harrar was reported on the 30th March, but this did relatively little damage.

ous, with heavy losses on both sides.<sup>1</sup> On the 25th April the Italians succeeded in taking Hamanlei, a few miles south of Sasa Baneh, but Sasa Baneh itself, though it was held by only a few hundred men, continued to hold out. General Graziani was obliged to call a halt for a few days, owing to the exhaustion of his men after the fighting of the 23rd–25th April and to the heavy rain which was disorganizing his transport arrangements.<sup>2</sup> When, on the 29th April, the Italians resumed the offensive, the Abyssinians' gallant resistance was quickly broken. The fighting since the middle of April had practically exhausted the inadequate supplies of ammunition at the disposal of the Abyssinians, and Dejazmach Nasibu and Vehib Pasha had to contend with the problem of desertion on a serious scale.<sup>3</sup> They were also presumably aware that if they lingered too long on the 'Hindenburg Line' they might be taken in the rear by the Italian army in the north, which was now moving on Addis Ababa from Dessye. On the 29th April Sasa Baneh and Bulale were captured by General Graziani's troops after desperate fighting, and the occupation of these two places marked the final collapse of the Abyssinian resistance on either front. Dejazmach Nasibu<sup>4</sup> and Vehib Pasha and the troops under their command retired northwards before the advancing Italians, who met with no effective resistance on the road to Harrar, though the force which had held Sasa Baneh fought occasional rear-guard actions. Daggah Bur was occupied by the Italians on the 30th April, but the progress of the Italian troops was then hampered by heavy rains and flooded rivers, and they did not reach Jiggiga until the 7th May. On that day there were disturbances in Harrar, which appeared likely to suffer the same fate as Addis Ababa at the hands of native rioters, but the arrival of a detachment of General Graziani's troops on the 8th May put an end to looting and burning in the city. Thus the Italian campaign on the Southern Front was brought to a successful conclusion three days after Marshal Badoglio's entry into Addis Ababa, and on

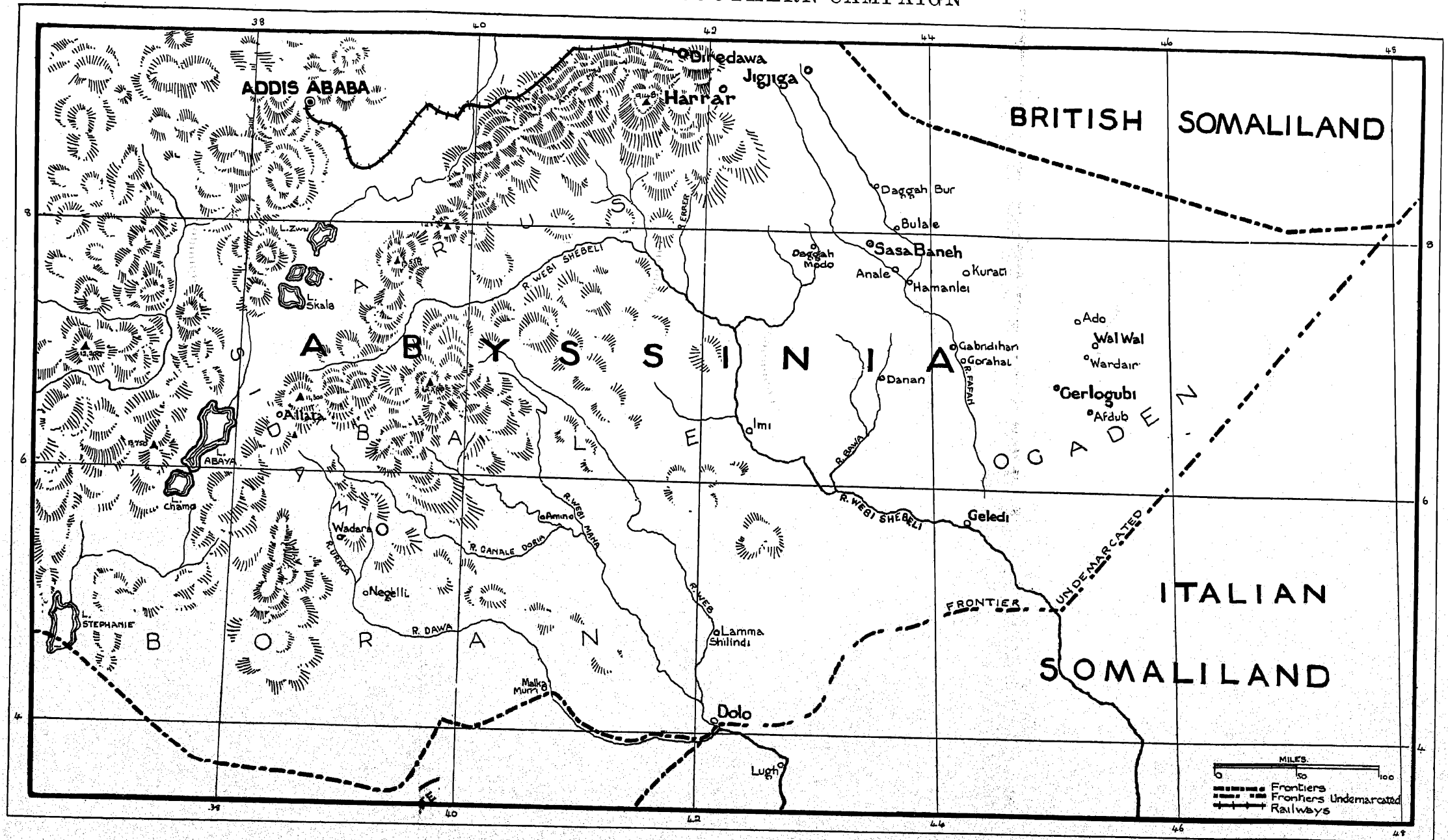
<sup>1</sup> The Italians admitted the loss between the 14th and the 30th April of 50 officers and 1,800 men—1,400 of the latter being Libyans and Somalis.

<sup>2</sup> According to Reuter, it was admitted in Rome on the 29th April that General Graziani's advance 'had been checked by resistance of quite unforeseen vigour'.

<sup>3</sup> Vehib Pasha told a correspondent of *The Daily Telegraph* in Cairo on the 20th May that the troops under his command had not wavered but had been forced to retire when the northern defence broke in order to avoid being surrounded; but in other interviews he admitted that the 'hungry and ill-equipped troops' had responded to the advances of Italian agents, who were provided with liberal supplies of money, and had simply disappeared during the night (see *The Manchester Guardian*, 4th June, 1936).

<sup>4</sup> Dejazmach Nasibu arrived at Djibouti just in time to have an interview with the Emperor before the latter's departure for Palestine on the 4th May.

# ABYSSINIA: SOUTHERN CAMPAIGN



the 9th May troops from the Southern Front made contact at Dire Dawa with a battalion from the Northern Front which had been sent down the railway from Addis Ababa.

(e) VIOLATIONS OF THE LAWS OF WAR

In times of war it is in no way unusual that there should be charges and counter-charges by the belligerents of breaches of the international treaties governing the conduct of hostilities;<sup>1</sup> and, in the case of a conflict between two states on different levels of civilization, it would not be particularly surprising if the more backward state were proved to have contravened the laws of 'civilized' warfare. Accusations of atrocities were, in fact, made against Abyssinia by Italy, but it was one of the most terrible features of the war that Italy herself—who proclaimed that one of her principal objects in invading Abyssinia was to convey the blessings of civilization to a barbarous people—should have been proved guilty of committing numerous acts in flagrant violation of the laws of war and of using the resources of modern science in defiance of international treaties and of the obligations of common humanity.<sup>2</sup>

The accusation most frequently made by the Italians against the Abyssinians was that they made use of explosive bullets, and from time to time photographs of Italian or native soldiers, who were alleged to have been wounded by such bullets, were forwarded to Geneva. It was probable that a certain amount of dum-dum ammunition which had been left behind by foreign big-game hunters had found its way into circulation in a country where ammunition was a kind of currency, and had been taken to the front by individual Abyssinian soldiers; and it was also possible for ordinary bullets to be converted into dum-dums. The Abyssinian Government did not deny that occasional use might have been made of dum-dum bullets by individuals in the field; but they declared that such bullets had never been issued to the troops. They also denied the truth of an Italian report that a stock of explosive bullets had been found at a

<sup>1</sup> The principal treaties laying down rules for the conduct of war which were in force in 1935 were the Hague Conventions of 1907; the protocol of the 17th June, 1925, prohibiting the use of asphyxiating, poisonous or other gases, and of bacteriological methods of warfare; and the two Red Cross Conventions of the 27th June, 1929, relating to the treatment of the wounded and the sick and of prisoners of war.

<sup>2</sup> For a summary of the charges of atrocities made by either side and the evidence on which they were based, see the report submitted by a Committee of Jurists to the Committee of Thirteen in April 1936 (for the appointment of the Committee of Jurists, see p. 345, above).

munitions depot at Taffari Katama.<sup>1</sup> The Italians declared that these bullets bore the mark of a British firm, and this and subsequent allegations that the Abyssinians received supplies of dum-dum ammunition from British sources were categorically denied by the British Government.<sup>2</sup> The Abyssinian Government, for their part, declared<sup>3</sup> that a large consignment of Italian dum-dum bullets arrived at Massawa in December 1935; and the Italian use of explosive ammunition was also testified to by the leader of the Dutch Red Cross unit, who declared that he and his colleagues had treated hundreds of Abyssinians who had been wounded by Italian dum-dum bullets.<sup>4</sup>

The Italians also accused the Abyssinians of mutilating and torturing prisoners and of mutilating the dead bodies of their enemies. In support of these charges they quoted as their chief witnesses the members of an Egyptian medical mission who had been working in Abyssinia. This evidence, the Abyssinians declared, was obtained by means of bribery; and, while it was admitted that an Italian airman who had been obliged to make a forced landing had been decapitated by nomads whose flocks had suffered from Italian air attacks, the allegations in general were dismissed by the Government at Addis Ababa as being without foundation. Mutilation of enemies was, however, in the tradition of Abyssinian warfare, so that it would have been surprising if no cases of the kind had occurred; and, in fact, the evidence available appeared to prove that the Italians were justified in bringing this accusation against their opponents.

Another Italian charge was that the Abyssinians used the Red Cross emblem for the protection of troops and military stores, and allegations of this kind were put forward as justification for the repeated bombardment by the Italians of Red Cross stations and hospitals. These accusations were substantiated to some extent by the evidence of a certain number of foreign journalists; but, on the

<sup>1</sup> The Abyssinian Government referred to the evidence of a Belgian officer, Major Dothée, who had visited the depot in question in November 1934 and who declared that there had been no explosive ammunition there at that date.

<sup>2</sup> The first Italian allegations of this kind against Great Britain were dealt with in a British memorandum which was communicated to the League of Nations on the 4th February, 1936. In April 1936 the Italian Government presented a memorandum at Geneva containing fresh allegations, but this was withdrawn before publication, and the British answer was also not published. On the 18th May, 1936, however, Mr. Eden made a full statement in the House of Commons at Westminster on the activities of 'Colonel Lopez' and the manufacture of the false evidence on which the Italian allegations were based.

<sup>3</sup> In a memorandum of the 2nd March, 1936, addressed to the International Committee of the Red Cross.

<sup>4</sup> See *The Times*, 19th May, 1936

other hand, members of foreign Red Cross units<sup>1</sup> who were the witnesses—and sometimes the victims—of Italian attacks from the air declared that the Italian allegations of abuse of the Red Cross had no foundation in fact.

The first occasion on which the Abyssinians reported that bombs had been dropped on buildings or tents bearing the sign of the Red Cross was at Adowa on the 3rd October, the day on which the Italian invasion began. On the 6th December a hospital maintained by the American Seventh Day Adventist Mission at Dessye was practically destroyed by air bombardment. A number of foreign doctors and missionaries who were in the town testified, in a message which was forwarded by the Abyssinian Government to the League of Nations, that the hospital and ambulances which were struck by explosive and incendiary bombs were clearly marked with the Red Cross and that the bombing had been deliberate—an opinion which was confirmed by representatives of the International Red Cross who made a visit of investigation to Dessye and who found that the large number of bombs on the site of the hospital precluded the possibility of an accident. At Negelli, on the 15th December, 1935, an Abyssinian Red Cross unit was bombed, and on the 22nd December the Swedish ambulance unit which was stationed not far from Dolo was attacked. This was a prelude to the far more serious incident of the 30th December, when the Swedish unit was bombed again, and two Swedish doctors were wounded—one fatally—and a large number of patients were killed. In addition practically the whole equipment of the unit was lost. The evidence of members of the unit appeared to leave little doubt that the act was deliberate, and their opinion was again confirmed by investigations conducted on behalf of the International Red Cross. Swedish witnesses declared that the tents and ambulances were clearly marked with the Red Cross, and that the camp was at a considerable distance from any troops—even the unit's escort was said to be nearly two miles away at the time of the raid. Moreover,

<sup>1</sup> In anticipation of the war which already appeared to be inevitable the Abyssinian Government had ratified the Geneva Red Cross Conventions of 1929 towards the end of July 1935. On the 6th August an Ethiopian National Red Cross Society was inaugurated, and during the next few weeks urgent appeals for help were sent to the International Committee of the Red Cross at Geneva and to Red Cross societies in various countries. When the war began there was only one ambulance unit available, and this was sent to the Southern Front under the control of the director of the American hospital at Addis Ababa. A Swedish unit was the next in the field, and other countries which organized help as rapidly as possible were Great Britain, Finland, the Netherlands and Egypt. For several weeks, however, there was no medical aid at all available for the Abyssinian wounded on the Northern Front.

they denied absolutely the Italian allegations that Abyssinians, other than wounded, had taken refuge under the sign of the Red Cross. The account of the incident which was issued by the Italian Ministry of Propaganda denied that the attack on the Red Cross camp had been deliberate, but described the bombardment which it was admitted had taken place near Dolo as an act of revenge for the alleged decapitation of an Italian airman who had crashed at Daggah Bur a few days earlier.<sup>1</sup> The Swedish Government protested vigorously against the Italian act,<sup>2</sup> and protests were also made by the Ethiopian Red Cross Society and by the International Red Cross Organization at Geneva, but these did not prevent the occurrence of other instances of the disregard of the Red Cross emblem by Italian airmen. On the 30th and 31st December the Egyptian Red Crescent ambulance had been bombed near Bulale, and on the 4th January, 1936, the equipment of an Ethiopian Red Cross unit, the staff of which included two English missionaries and two Egyptian doctors, was destroyed near Daggah Bur. On the 15th January a camp belonging to the Ethiopian Red Cross was bombed at Waldia, north of Dessye; and on the 18th another Abyssinian ambulance unit, staffed by foreign doctors, was bombed near Makalle. The Egyptian Red Crescent suffered again on the 11th and 12th February; and on the 3rd March and on the succeeding days a British Red Cross unit stationed near Kworam was bombed repeatedly, in spite of the fact that the Italian Government had been notified through the International Red Cross of the presence of the unit in that neighbourhood. The British Government, like the Swedish Government, made a formal protest in Rome against this outrage.<sup>3</sup> Another British ambulance unit was attacked at Chilga on the 20th March, and three days earlier the Swedish Red Cross had again been bombed on the Southern Front. An Ethiopian Red Cross aeroplane had been bombed on the 9th February, and another was destroyed at Kworam on the 17th March.

These incidents during the first three months of 1936 were less serious than the attack on the Swedish ambulance on the 30th December, 1935, in so far as they caused less loss of life, but for the most part they were equally well attested. The fact that camps and ambulances clearly marked with the Red Cross were repeatedly attacked from the air, was not, indeed, open to doubt, and in several cases there was strong evidence that the bombing had been a deliberate act. In regard to the reports of attacks on open towns and villages, it was difficult to prove conclusively that the Italian action was not undertaken in the genuine belief that there were concentrations of

<sup>1</sup> See p. 410, above.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 328, above.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 341, above.

troops in the neighbourhood. By April 1936 the Abyssinian Government had notified the League of Nations of a long list of open towns which were alleged to have been subjected to bombardment from the air, beginning with Adowa and Addi Grat on the 3rd October, 1935, and ending with Harrar on the 29th March, 1936.<sup>1</sup> There appeared to be no reason to doubt the truth of these accusations, but they were naturally not so well supported by foreign testimony as were the reports of attacks upon the Red Cross; and the same reservation applied to the charge which was made by the Abyssinian Government that the Italians had destroyed churches at Daggah Bur in November, in Shire and Tembyen when they were obliged in December 1935 to retreat from ground which they had occupied, and at Sokota and Abbi Addi in January 1936.

In the case of the most serious accusation of all—that the Italians made use of poisonous gases—there was an overwhelming weight of evidence available from doctors who had treated patients suffering from the effects of gas and from other reliable witnesses who had opportunities of verification. There was also the evidence of the Suez Canal returns, which showed that large quantities of poisonous gases and of gas bombs were received by the Italian forces. In adopting the methods of chemical warfare in Abyssinia the Italian Government could not escape the onus of direct responsibility.<sup>2</sup> On the 3rd April, 1928, the Italian Government had ratified their signature of the convention of the 17th June, 1925, whereby they declared, in common with the other signatories, that the use of chemical and bacteriological methods of warfare had been ‘justly condemned by the general opinion of the civilized world’ and bound themselves to accept the prohibition of such methods as between the signatories of the convention. In the hope of benefiting from these provisions the Abyssinian Government had also ratified the convention on the 18th September, 1935. This scrap of paper, however, was as easily torn up by Italian hands as the Covenant of the League of Nations and the Kellogg Pact for the Renunciation of War. In April 1936 the Abyssinian Government sent to Geneva a report on the use of poisonous gases by the Italian troops, according to which Abyssinian towns (many of them outside the area of fighting) had been bombed or sprayed with poison gas on eighteen occasions between the 22nd

<sup>1</sup> See p. 407, above. Egyptian and Ethiopian Red Cross hospitals and a French hospital suffered on this occasion. Harrar had been formally declared an open town on the 2nd December, 1935 (see p. 386, footnote 2, above), but the Italians declared in justification of their action that air reconnaissance had shown that the town was strongly garrisoned and fortified.

<sup>2</sup> See also p. 327, above.



December, 1935, and the 7th April, 1936. According to the same report gas was used for the first time against troops in the field on the Northern Front (in the Takazye region) on the 23rd December, and on the Southern Front on the 30th December. At the turn of the year the Italian press contained a series of articles accusing the Abyssinians of atrocities and urging that all available means of warfare should be employed against these barbarians,<sup>1</sup> and from that time onwards the use of chemical methods of warfare was gradually intensified, especially on the Northern Front. Mustard-gas (yperite) was said to have been used at Sokota on the 10th January, and it was mentioned again in Abyssinian accounts of air-raids south of Amba Alagi in February. Spraying and bombing with mustard-gas was greatly increased from the beginning of March onwards, and the town of Kworam was said to have been saturated with it between the 4th and the 7th April. On the Southern Front gas bombing at Daggah Bur and Sasa Baneh were reported on the 8th April, but on the whole less use seems to have been made of poison gas in the south than in the north.

The Abyssinians were without all but the most elementary and inadequate forms of protection against these methods and without any means of retaliation, and the repeated appeals which they addressed to the League of Nations for the exercise of restraint upon Italy brought them no practical help. The action, such as it was, which was taken at Geneva in April 1936 in connexion with the use of poison gas and other atrocities<sup>2</sup> had not the slightest influence upon the course of events; and within three weeks of the adoption by the Committee of Thirteen of a report dealing with the mutual allegations of atrocities Italian methods had finally broken down Abyssinian organized resistance, and Marshal Badoglio had entered Addis Ababa at the head of his victorious army.

## (xii) The Economic Aspects of the Italo-Abyssinian Conflict

By H. V. Hodson

### (a) INTRODUCTORY

In the economic history of 1935 the Italo-Abyssinian conflict and the sanctions of the League take the leading place, not so much

<sup>1</sup> In a note of the 18th April, 1936, to the Italian Government, asking for a detailed statement in reply to the Abyssinian allegations regarding the use of poison gas, Señor de Madariaga, the chairman of the Committee of Thirteen, pointed out that the protocol of 1925, which forbade the use of poisonous and asphyxiating gases, did not include any reservation which would permit the use of such gases in retaliation for atrocities committed by an enemy.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 345 *seqq.*, above.

because of their intrinsic importance in this sphere, as because they were among the surface symptoms of deeper, volcanic economic forces. The efforts of the League were an essay in economic pressure, exposing both the strength and the vulnerability of different Powers and groups of Powers in trade and production, and illustrating in vivid relief the connexion between strategy and economics. The conflict itself arose from a tangle of causes, to which an earlier section of this *Survey* devotes a full discussion;<sup>1</sup> but no one, looking at the relations between the European Powers and Abyssinia since the days of the Emperor Menelik, and viewing in broad compass the trend of policy in post-war Italy, could deny that among those causes economic pressures played an important part. That this was so was acknowledged, not only upon such occasions as Sir Samuel Hoare's speech to the League Assembly on the 11th September, 1935,<sup>2</sup> but still more plainly in the movement of public opinion in Great Britain and other countries. There emerged a sharp realization that when peace came the reconstruction ought to include a revision of economic policies and an attempt to relieve the economic pressures that sought distraction in war. Some people even felt that the Italo-Abyssinian conflict might serve a beneficial turn in history through forcing the World to mend its economic as well as its political ways.

#### (b) ITALY'S ECONOMIC POSITION

Many apologists for Italy's action laid stress upon her need for imported raw materials as a reason for seeking a wider colonial empire. The import of raw materials was, however, but one element in the problem of her balance of external payments, no more serious in itself than the export of manufactures or the tourist trade, and incapable of treatment as an isolated fact. Moreover, for reasons that will emerge more clearly in the course of this discussion of the conflict's economic aspects, it is impossible to perceive in Italy's economic needs, however grave, the direct cause or justification of her aggression. A more likely diagnosis is that economic troubles gave rise to political and psychological tension among the rulers and people of Italy, driving them to seek distraction in an overseas adventure and even in deliberate defiance of the World. Although the Abyssinian adventure could conveniently be depicted as the outcome of economic pressures, the blame for which could be laid at other countries' doors, it was incapable in itself of affording any swift or certain economic relief. Nevertheless, it may be useful to follow the line of con-

<sup>1</sup> See section (ii).

<sup>2</sup> See above, pp. 185 *seqq.*

temporary public thought by starting from a consideration of the raw materials problem.

Italy's economic position in the world of 1935 was not particularly enviable. Possessing a population of 42,000,000, on an area of less than 120,000 square miles, one-third of which was unfit for cultivation, she could live only by exporting manufactures and specialized products in return for her needs. In this respect, of course, she was in the same case as Great Britain, Germany, Japan and many other countries. But her deficiency in the raw materials necessary for the conduct of her industry was even more conspicuous than that of Great Britain or Germany, because her resources of coal and iron were of little account; in spite of the development of her hydro-electric resources her first requirement from abroad was fuel, the most fundamental raw material of mechanized industry. In 1934 her imports of coal were valued at 775,000,000 lire, and of mineral oils and by-products at 297,000,000 lire. These amounts together totalled nearly 14 per cent. of all her imports. But fast on the heels of coal in the forefront of Italy's imports was cotton, and not far behind came wool—the raw materials of her important textile industries. Hides and skins, timber, non-ferrous metals, iron and steel—all these Italy was bound to import in large quantities in order to keep her industries going and her population employed. In addition she still paid, in 1934, no less than 185,000,000 lire for imported wheat, notwithstanding her expensive and widely advertised efforts to render herself self-sufficient in grain. She had already come close, however, to independence of such imports; for her import surplus of wheat and flour had been reduced from 18,500,000 quintals in 1925-6 (as much as 23,800,000 in 1927-8) to 2,300,000 quintals in 1933-4. It was in raw materials, rather than in food-stuffs, that her major import problem lay.

In 1934 Italy's imports amounted to 7,667,000,000 lire; to the tune of 5,225,000,000 lire she paid for them by commodity exports. Her economic position in relation to the World, vulnerable by reason of the necessity for raw material imports, was not shielded in any large measure by the indispensability of her exports for other countries. By far her largest group of exports was manufactured or semi-manufactured textiles: these were the values of that branch of her trade in 1934—raw silk, 97,000,000 lire; artificial silk, 557,000,000 lire; hemp, 129,000,000 lire; cotton goods, 493,000,000 lire; woollen goods, 256,000,000 lire; making a total of 1,532,000,000 lire. In the textile trade of the World there was intense international competition, as Lancashire and Yorkshire found to their cost; and textile manufactures were one of the first objects of protection, not only in

the industrial countries of Europe, but also in countries like the British Dominions that were anxious to promote their secondary industries in order to achieve 'a more balanced economy'. After textiles, food-stuffs like cheese, rice, citrus fruits and dried fruit, and wine and vermouth, formed the most important group of Italy's exports, the specified items accounting for 871,000,000 lire in 1934. None of these could be described as staples for any importing country, and for most of them there were ample alternative sources of supply.

In two minor raw materials Italy possessed, not by any means a monopoly, but a sufficient fraction of the World's supply to raise the question whether, if her exports were arrested, world consumers would not be awkwardly placed. They were mercury and sulphur. In 1934-5, world potential production of mercury amounted to roughly 6,500 metric tons per annum, of which approximately 1,750 metric tons was attributed to Spain and slightly more than 2,000 metric tons to Italy. Heavy stocks overhung the market, but consumption was rising rapidly owing to the increased demand for armament purposes. On the other hand, the United States was a potential world supplier if the price were high enough, and Spain's productive capacity was far from being fully employed.<sup>1</sup> Similar considerations applied to sulphur; for, although Italy remained a very important supplier, world markets for sulphur were dominated by the United States, and if prices were high enough the potential production from widely distributed volcanic ores, or as a by-product of metal-refining and coke industries, was almost indefinitely great.

An adverse balance of commodity trade was a normal feature of Italy's external accounts. In 1929 the adverse balance was 6,429,000,000 lire; in 1933 it had fallen, on a greatly reduced turnover, to 1,433,000,000 lire; in 1934 it rose again to 2,441,000,000 lire. The margin was made up mainly by freight and shipping receipts, tourist expenditure in Italy and the remittances of former Italian emigrants. Thus in 1932, when the deficit on commodity trade amounted to 1,446,000,000 lire (to which must be added 500,000,000 lire odd for interest and other financial payments abroad), tourist business brought in 830,000,000 lire net, emigrant remittances 910,000,000 lire net and shipping earnings 500,000,000 lire net. The depression in shipping and tourist industries struck Italy hard; and at the same time she suffered severely from the cessation of migration and more particularly from the impoverishment of the United States from 1930 onwards.

<sup>1</sup> Spain's export of quicksilver rose from 3,626 quintals in the second half of 1934 to 13,673 quintals in the second half of 1935.

While Italy's economic relations with the rest of the World were thus far from satisfactory for a country determined to rid itself of dependence on other lands (either for economic or, more cogently, for strategic reasons), it must be remembered that much the same picture could be painted, by the selection of appropriate facts, of the position of any great international trading Power, not least of Great Britain, or even (though in a smaller measure) of the whole British Empire. Respect for the economic pressures that drove Italy in upon herself, and even brought her to the point of desperation, must not obscure the fact that she herself did little, through the economic and social policies she adopted, to deflect those pressures or to meet the conditions of an intensely competitive world. Her population was rapidly increasing on a limited area, it is true: it rose from 37,900,000 in 1921 to 42,840,000 in 1935, and was still increasing at the annual rate of ten per thousand of the population (excess of live births over deaths); and it is true that the restriction of immigration into the United States and other countries struck the Italian social and economic structure a sharp blow. But the authorities of the Fascist state, so far from discouraging the increase of population, did everything in their power to encourage it, though not with complete success; moreover, so far from promoting emigration within the areas and quotas left open, they were inclined to discourage it, and, by their insistence on regarding expatriate Italians as still citizens of the Fascist state, went far to justify and confirm oversea countries in their reluctance to accept Italian immigrants.

If, then, it was a major purpose of public policy to stimulate the increase of the Italian population on Italian soil, there remained no means of supporting them—Italy's internal resources being so narrowly limited by Nature—save through an expansion of foreign trade. Yet not only was the policy of the corporative state distinctly protectionist; Italy's financial economy was based on an over-valued lira coupled with an expansionist internal policy, a combination that was bound to cause a contraction of foreign trade, and to necessitate further protection in order to defend the national balance of payments. It is not too fanciful to trace the origins of the Italian outbreak in Africa—in so far as it was due to economic pressures—to Signor Mussolini's speech at Pesaro in 1926, in which he swore to defend the lira to the last drop of blood.

The blood was shed in Tigre and the Ogaden, but the lira was already past saving. The only policy capable of defending an over-valued gold currency was a course of exceedingly stiff deflation. The dictatorial, corporative state was in a far better position than demo-

cratic countries to impose a deflation of the price structure by direct action: that is to say, cutting prices all round by order. Thus in April 1934 a decree was promulgated in Italy reducing the retail prices of all foodstuffs sold in co-operative stores by 10 per cent., the rents of dwelling-houses by 12 per cent., and those of shops and other buildings by 15 per cent.; and at the same time the salaries of state employees were cut.<sup>1</sup> This direct slicing of prices all round was in itself a less dangerous method of price deflation than the orthodox method of stringent restriction of credit, since it avoided the intermediate stage of slackened industry and enlarged unemployment. But without a restriction of credit, in particular without a budgetary contraction, it was not enough. Those conditions were absent. The Italian Government conducted a considerable programme of public works, including the reclamation of land, largely through the agency of credit institutes authorized to borrow money from the public against the security of future public revenues, or by paying the contractors in terms of deferred annuities. The cost did not, therefore, appear to any great extent in current budgets, but formed a growing mortgage on the future. Nevertheless, the national budget showed a persistent deficit. In the five years 1930-1 to 1934-5 the aggregate deficit was 17,671,000,000 lire,<sup>2</sup> and the estimates for 1935-6 showed a further deficit of 1,657,000,000 lire, not counting extraordinary expenditures required for the Abyssinian campaign. The internal national debt rose from 88,102,000,000 lire at the 30th June, 1930, to 105,004,000,000 lire at the 31st January, 1935. Inevitably these policies expanded the total volume of currency and credit, and, by thus supporting the price level, enhanced Italy's difficulties in foreign trade.

The necessary consequence was pressure on the lira and a loss of gold. The gold and foreign exchange reserves of the Bank of Italy fell steadily as the World Depression proceeded. The drain was arrested in 1933, partly through an improvement in the balance of commodity trade; but as the trade debit rose in 1934 the loss of gold was resumed again at an accelerated pace. The reserves fell from 7,397,000,000 lire at the end of 1933 to 5,883,000,000 at the end of 1934, and the reserve ratio fell to only a few points above the legal minimum ratio of 40 per cent. This in itself discouraged holders of

<sup>1</sup> See the *Survey for 1934*, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Figures for 1930-1 to 1933-4 taken from Professor Repaci's articles in *La Riforma Sociale* for May-June 1934 and March-April 1935; the figure for 1934-5 is the preliminary budget estimate (quoted in Royal Institute of International Affairs: *The Economic and Financial Position of Italy*, 1935, Oxford University Press).

liquid balances and stimulated the withdrawal of funds. But since the free movement of capital and gold was not allowed, a discount of 5 to 10 per cent. appeared on the lira in relation to other gold currencies; the lira was in effect no longer attached to the international gold standard. Various measures of exchange control were applied, and on the 21st May, 1935, a decree of the previous December,<sup>1</sup> calling in all privately held foreign securities, was put into force. Within twenty days all such foreign assets were to be handed in to the Bank of Italy or other banks, marked 'in account for the National Institute of Foreign Exchanges'. Where stock was deposited with banks abroad the name of the Bank of Italy was to be substituted for those of the existing holders. The decree did not apply to collateral securities deposited with foreign banks if it could be shown that they were required for the purposes of trade or to guarantee a bank overdraft. At the same time a new decree was promulgated providing that all silver coins be withdrawn from circulation and replaced by coins of a cheap white metal. An exceptionally high price was then ruling for silver, and the Italian Government doubtless intended to strengthen the currency reserves by accumulating demonetized silver for sale on the world market.

As Signor Mussolini strode farther and farther down the path of foreign policy that he had chosen, and war in East Africa seemed to grow more and more certain, the tension in the exchanges became still greater. In mid-July the forward lira was quoted in London at a discount equivalent to a rate of over 30 per cent. per annum—a sounder index of the true economic value of the currency than the spot rate, which was being officially pegged at 10 to 12 per cent. discount on the gold parity. On the 2nd July the decree of 1927, fixing the Bank of Italy's minimum gold reserve at 40 per cent. of the note issue, was suspended. The inscription of Signor Mussolini's monetary purpose, carved at Pesaro, was becoming more and more rudely defaced. On the 12th August the Bank of Italy raised its bank-rate from  $3\frac{1}{2}$  to  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent., the semi-official explanation being simply that the orthodox method was being used to protect gold reserves. In the last ten days of July 267,000,000 lire of gold had been lost, at which rate the existing gold reserves would disappear in twenty weeks. On the 1st August a new decree went into force, establishing an official import monopoly for pit coal, carbon, coke, copper, tin and nickel, and subsidiary products; the decree stated that the monopoly was being instituted in order to regulate 'the disposition of foreign purchases in relation to the better development of Italian exports',

<sup>1</sup> See the *Survey for 1934*, p. 36.

which must presumably be taken to mean that Italy would buy only from countries that bought equally from her.

Still more drastic measures were announced a month later, after the meeting of the emergency Cabinet at Bolzano.<sup>1</sup> All private credits abroad were to be handed over in exchange for lire at the market rate, and all foreign securities and Italian securities issued abroad were to be converted into nine-year Treasury bonds bearing interest at 5 per cent. A second decree enforced a limitation of all company dividends and similar payments within Italy; for three years no industrial or commercial company would be allowed to pay a dividend of more than 6 per cent., unless more than that figure had been paid during the past three years, in which case the average of those years would become the future maximum. Any portion of profits not paid out in dividends would be invested in state funds, and would constitute a special reserve fund, which would remain the property of the company but would not be disposable for a period of three years. The third decree imposed a special tax of 10 per cent. on the interest on bearer bonds and similar securities. Finally, another decree laid down that all passenger vehicles used for public service in towns must be fitted with motors burning fuel oil or some derivative. The last of these measures (indeed the others too) might be regarded as a preliminary precaution against the imposition of economic sanctions, but as Italian official opinion at that time appeared not to believe that such sanctions would be imposed, the economy in motor spirit may be included with the other attempts to buttress Italy's foreign exchange resources and to find new money for Government purposes. The decrees caused an instant slump in many important industrial shares. Thus, even before the war began, and before collective economic pressure was brought to bear upon Italy, her economic position already demanded extraordinary measures which could not be repeated and which could only be justified as means of surmounting a severe financial crisis.

### (c) THE ECONOMIC CAUSES OF THE CONFLICT

If this picture shows Italy in a weak and progressively deteriorating economic position in relation to the rest of the World, it remains to be considered how the conquest of Abyssinia might seem, to an excited national imagination, to promise any measure of economic salvation. On the face of things, certainly, Abyssinia had few economic prizes to offer. At its peak of 1928-9 her foreign trade amounted to no more than £1,649,000 in imports and £1,174,000 in exports, and with the fall in world prices for the commodities that she had to sell

<sup>1</sup> See p. 177, above.



(chiefly coffee, hides and skins, and a certain amount of beeswax) her trade had shrunk considerably in value. Of Abyssinia's imports no less than 57 per cent. by value came from British India (including Aden), and a further 12 per cent. from Japan. The single item of salt made up as much as 40 per cent. of her imports by volume. Imports from Great Britain were in the neighbourhood of 4 to 5 per cent. of the total. Hence it was certainly not through obtaining control of Abyssinia's existing foreign trade that Italy could hope to secure any substantial economic relief. The economic opportunities, such as they were, lay rather in the chances of developing Abyssinia's untapped, or merely skimmed, natural resources. The soil of a great part of the country was excellent, and the climate of the highlands (within the tropics, but possessing a monsoon rainfall and scarcely ever experiencing heat above 80 degrees) allowed the cultivation of two crops a year, and occasionally even three. Apart from staple cereals the country was well suited to the cultivation of rubber and cotton—the latter being one of the most vital necessities for Italian industry. Other possibilities for a greatly expanded agriculture included coffee, sugar and bananas. The uplands were also eminently suitable for the pasturage of sheep and cattle. The trade in wool (another important requirement for Italy) was not developed on an export scale, but there was already an important export trade, amounting to some £250,000 a year, in hides and skins. The mineral resources were almost entirely untapped, the chief exception being platinum, of which 190,603 grammes were produced by primitive methods in 1933, making 3 per cent. of total world output. The presence of gold, potash, coal, iron, tin, copper and oil was known, but in what quantities no one could hazard more than a vague guess. The potential value of the oil-fields was indicated by the notorious and somewhat sinister negotiation of concessions that whipped up a storm in the international tea-cup in September 1935—an incident whose chief importance seemed to lie, as things turned out, in the evidence that it gave of a desire in official circles at Washington to afford at least a negative support to the League's efforts.<sup>1</sup>

If we are to seek in the unexploited natural resources of Abyssinia the immediate economic motives of Italian aggression, it remains to be seen how the command of such resources could afford a net advantage to a colonial Power in Italy's position. Could she find the capital necessary to develop those resources on a grand scale, and, if she had to borrow it, would not that constitute a further strain on her balance of international payments? Might not the foreign exchange problem,

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 178-9, above.

so frequently emphasized in controversy over colonial questions at that time, be merely transferred from the borders of Italy to those of Italy-cum-Abyssinia? Clearly a new economic equilibrium would have to be established, in which a category of trade that had previously been international would become internal to a single governmental system, at the same time being considerably expanded (or so Italy hoped). Whether this new system would be advantageous to Italy, and help to solve her economic problems, would clearly depend on two main factors: the extent to which a mutually profitable exchange of goods could be promoted between Italy and the old or immigrant inhabitants of Abyssinia, and the ability of the enlarged Italian empire to strike a new and more satisfactory balance in its total trade relations with the rest of the World, since what was bought must be paid for, and what was sold must find a purchaser, whether the transaction was across or within national frontiers. The experience of the British Empire showed that neither of those questions could be answered offhand in favour of Italy. It was possible, however, that an actively stimulated development of colonial resources under a Fascist régime might yield different results from those attainable under the more *laissez-faire* principles of British colonial policy. In any case, the exploitation of Abyssinia's resources would require a large-scale investment of capital, and the more Italian settlers there were to be the more capital they would have to take with them. The earlier part of this chapter has made it clear that Italy's finances were in no state to furnish the necessary capital; she was using every penny of exportable funds on which she could lay hands to defend her exchange, and had already mobilized for that purpose most of her existing capital invested abroad. Some assets might be found, in the event of complete conquest, through the confiscation or mobilization of hoarded precious metals and similar reserves in Abyssinia itself, but it seemed likely that much of the capital necessary for the development of the country's resources would have to be borrowed on the international market. That being so, Italy's actual diplomatic and military policy, by antagonizing the Governments and people of the great lending countries, appeared scarcely likely to further her economic cause. The war in itself would gravely impoverish her, and deplete such capacity as she still had for the economic development of the coveted land. Its most favourable military outcome would imply continuous expenditure, for a long period of years, on 'pacification' and the defence of settlers.

Thus economic motives, however vital in bringing about the state of mind and of politics in Italy in which war became an objective in

itself, seem not to have been the direct impulse behind Italy's act of aggression in the autumn of 1935. The effect of economic difficulties was to produce in Italy a sense of strangulation, demanding desperate remedies as a means of psychological escape. Among the mass of the Italian population they caused such hardship that a dictator might well be driven to invoke the *deus ex machina* of war in order to forestall an outburst of discontent. But Signor Mussolini might have learnt from history that even the title 'The Man who Won the War' might not be glorious enough to carry its bearer triumphantly through the vicissitudes of the subsequent peace.

#### (d) THE IMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS

The Assembly of the League of Nations, having declared Italy to be an international aggressor on the 8th October, 1935, forthwith proceeded to set up machinery for co-ordinating the action of the different states members in carrying out their obligations under Article 16 of the Covenant. The political aspect of these events is recorded in another chapter of this *Survey*,<sup>1</sup> so that they need be narrated here only with the greatest brevity, as a framework for an account of the economic forces that were thus set to work. The Co-ordination Committee of fifty League members adopted one by one the following recommendations to the Governments that had expressed their readiness to apply non-military sanctions.

1. *Arms embargo.* Prohibition of the export of arms and ammunition to Italy, including materials for chemical warfare and all aircraft and aircraft engines.

2. *Financial embargo.* A ban on all loans, share issues, banking credits and advances for or on behalf of the Italian Government or any person, corporation or public authority in Italy.

3. *Import embargo.* Prohibition by League members of the importation of all goods (other than gold or silver coin or bullion) consigned from or grown, produced or manufactured in Italy or Italian possessions. Goods already *en route* were to be excepted, but not goods the subject of existing contracts.

4. *Ban on Essential Materials.* Addition of certain articles, including rubber, bauxite, iron ore and scrap iron, chromium, manganese, nickel and tin, to the arms embargo list, these being articles the world supply of which was controlled by League members.

5. *Mutual Support.* Undertakings to minimize the economic injury that might be done to League members through the imposition of sanctions, by replacing Italian goods with goods from such members, and generally by facilitating trade relations with them.

<sup>1</sup> See section (vi) above.

The arms embargo stands in a category apart from the main economic sanctions thus proposed; economically, it may be included as a subordinate part of the fourth proposal, the ban on the supply to Italy of important raw materials. This proposal was sometimes referred to as the French sanction, and the proposed ban on imports from Italy as the British sanction, because the representatives of France and the United Kingdom, while concurring in the whole scheme, were respectively to the fore in proposing each of those two methods of applying pressure to the declared aggressor. It was natural, perhaps, that a world trading country like Great Britain, with experience of wars of attrition both from within and from without, should have laid stress on the attempt to destroy Italy's general purchasing power abroad, as a means of undermining her ability to prosecute the war. As the Foreign Secretary, Mr. Anthony Eden, said in the House of Commons on the 24th February, 1936:

Normally imports into any country are paid for by one of three methods—by exports, visible or invisible, by capital transactions or by gold. The sanctions which the League imposed very largely eliminate, so far as League action can do it, the first two methods of payment, and I would remind the House that the normal exports of Italy to the nations of the League amount to 70 per cent. of her export trade. It will be seen, therefore, that the power of the aggressor to purchase must in consequence be very seriously reduced. A nation in such a position can of course continue to purchase in gold as long as her reserves of gold and foreign exchange allow it, but in such conditions the reserves of any nation must be steadily depleted. There would then come a time when the power to purchase was exhausted altogether. . . . The effect of these sanctions which have been imposed is in fact continuous and cumulative.

The decision to wage collective economic war against the aggressor should be seen in relation to the report of the special committee of thirteen members set up by the League Council in April 1935 to propose measures that would render the Covenant more effective in the organization of collective security,<sup>1</sup> and to define, in particular, the economic and financial measures that might be applied should a state endanger peace by a unilateral repudiation of its international obligations. This action was taken by the Council, with an eye, not to Italy, but to Germany, as the potential repudiator of obligations. The committee considered favourably the plan of an arms embargo, suggesting that even certain specialized machine tools might be included in the list; but went on to point out that there were many key products which, apart from their military uses, were widely employed in industry and agriculture, and which consequently could

<sup>1</sup> See the *Survey for 1935*, vol. i, pp. 163-5.

not be withheld without interfering more or less seriously with the economic life of the country in question. The ban on exports from the repudiating state had several general advantages, but had also disadvantages important enough to render the whole system impracticable and undesirable. Discrimination in favour of the civilian population, which was theoretically possible in any embargo on sales to the repudiating state, would here be out of the question; and in any case the ban could affect only financially weak countries which did not possess adequate reserves. The committee thought that there should be no difficulty in prohibiting financial accommodation for the repudiating Government, but that serious difficulties would arise if the prohibition were extended to cover all possible issues by individuals or legal persons who were nationals of the state concerned. It would be undesirable, they thought, to attempt any interference with short-term credit operations other than those in favour of the repudiating Government itself.

What was the reason for the contrast between this cold-water report and the comprehensive measures actually adopted at Geneva only three months later—not to mention those provisionally recommended but never carried out? Some part of the answer must be found in the fact that Italy was indeed a 'financially weak country', and was even more vulnerable economically than Germany. But far more important were two more general facts. In the first place, the uprush of public opinion in League countries against Italy's defiance of the World compelled their representatives at Geneva to treat the collective efforts against the 'repudiating state' as an economic *guerre totale*, intended to intercept a national purpose as well as a military adventure. Whether they were well advised or not, many of the measures applied to Italy under Article 16 obviously exerted their principal effect on the Italian population as a whole. In the second place, the extent of participation in economic sanctions obviously exceeded the Committee of Thirteen's vision of an effort by a comparatively limited group. When the decision of principle came to be taken at Geneva, only Albania, Austria and Hungary expressed their dissent. Albania was virtually a dependency of Italy,<sup>1</sup> and Austria also had special political reasons for her decision,<sup>2</sup> while both Austria and Hungary had strong economic ties with Italy, and feared the disruption of their whole economies if they were to share in collective measures which would affect only a small fraction of the

<sup>1</sup> See p. 430, footnote 4, below. See also the *Survey for 1927*, Part II C, section (ii); the *Survey for 1934*, pp. 535-6.

<sup>2</sup> See the *Survey for 1934*, Part III C, sections (i) and (ii).

Italy was prevented from raising a loan in the United States by the Johnson Act, forbidding such a service on behalf of a country in default on its obligations to the United States Government, though her nationals could, of course, borrow money privately to finance commercial transactions so long as their credit remained unexhausted. Expansion of imports from Germany was handicapped by the existence of a clearing agreement, and Germany was in no position to sell goods on credit. German exporters were officially warned in October that in view of the large accumulation of lira balances awaiting transfer they should use great caution in future dealings with Italian customers; and at the beginning of November, before the main economic sanctions went into operation, the Reich Government declared an embargo on the export of certain raw materials, in order, it was stated, to protect the economic resources of the country. The embargo covered edible oils and fats, potatoes, iron and steel, non-ferrous metals except copper, textile materials and non-edible oils of all sorts. Coal was not included, officially on the ground that exports of coal, as of copper, were already subject to control. On the 7th November the official German news agency issued a statement in the following terms:

The German standpoint with reference to Germany's neutrality is well-known and has in no way altered. Should an abnormal increase of exports of raw materials or food-stuffs become apparent, which threatens Germany's own economic interests, the German Government will prevent it by appropriate measures.

These developments went some way to reassure League countries against the possibility of a great loss of trade to Germany, which at the same time would undermine the purpose of the economic sanctions. On the outbreak of the war Germany had imposed an embargo on the export of arms to either belligerent.

The attitude of the United States remained one of the keys to the effectiveness of economic sanctions, especially those designed directly to arrest Italy's supplies of essential raw materials. On the 5th October, 1935, acting under the Joint Resolution of Congress of the previous 31st August, President Roosevelt imposed an embargo on the export of arms, ammunition and implements of war (including all aircraft and aircraft engines) to or for either belligerent country; and at the same time he gave notice that any citizen of the United States who might travel on any vessel of either belligerent would do so at his own risk.<sup>1</sup> The direct importance of these actions in relation to

<sup>1</sup> See also pp. 241-2, above.

economic sanctions was less than their indirect importance as an index of the American mood and the American official policy towards war and neutrality. Much more significant in the present connexion was the public statement<sup>1</sup> of Mr. Cordell Hull, Secretary of State, on the 15th November, in which he drew attention to the considerable increase in the exports of 'essential war materials' such as 'oil, copper, trucks, tractors, scrap iron and scrap steel', and declared that 'this class of trade' was 'directly contrary to the policy of the Government' and to 'the general spirit of the recent Neutrality Act'.

In reply to an invitation from the League of Nations to define its position with regard to the proposed collective measures against the aggressor, the American Administration had declared itself ready 'not only to exercise its impartial influence in favour of peace . . . but to contribute in every practical way within the limitations of [American] foreign policy to that end'. Striking as these pronouncements were, however, they had no executive force, and before many weeks had passed the tide of American feeling on whose crest they rode had become a stormy sea of controversy. The Laval-Hoare Peace Plan caused a revulsion of American feeling; for it was interpreted as a sign that the principles of international justice counted for less among the leading members of the League than the safe-guarding of their own vital interests and the preservation of the European balance of power. American isolationism exchanged its mood of repudiating the profits to be made out of other people's wars for a mood of refusing any co-operation with the League. Yet the Administration's pronouncements must have had some effect in discouraging the less profitable or more hazardous of trade dealings with the belligerents; and they certainly gave a moral encouragement to the League Powers to go forward with the sanctions policy, in the reasonable hope that, if American trade were shown in practice to be intercepting the collective purpose, the Administration, supported by public opinion, would take more forcible action to resist the expansion of exports.

The five proposals of the Co-ordination Committee were not intended to be a complete and final picture of measures to be applied to deter the aggressor and stop the war. The proposals had been adopted on the recommendation of the Committee of Eighteen or 'Little Co-ordination Committee',<sup>2</sup> and it was the duty of this committee to consider and recommend such further sanctions, or changes in those already applied, as might prove advisable. The outstanding task of the committee was the problem of an embargo on the sale to

<sup>1</sup> This is quoted on p. 244, above.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 222, above.

Italy of raw materials and foodstuffs that were vital for the continued prosecution of the war but of which the states members of the League did not control the world supply. On the 6th November (acting on a suggestion by the Canadian delegate which was later described by the Prime Minister, Mr. Mackenzie King, as having been made only in his personal capacity)<sup>1</sup> the Committee of Eighteen adopted a resolution approving in principle the extension of the export embargo to petroleum and its derivatives, iron and steel, coal and coke, 'as soon as the conditions necessary to render this extension effective' had 'been realized'. The mooted of what was popularly known as the oil sanction had a profound effect on the international political situation,<sup>2</sup> with the result that there was further considerable delay before the matter again came forward for decision.

Although other commodities had been included in the resolution of the Committee of Eighteen, discussion at once focused on oil, partly for reasons of substance and partly because oil had politically a bad smell. Italy herself produced, and was capable of producing, only a negligible quantity of mineral oil, but she had adopted the fixed policy of encouraging the import of crude oil or residual products and their refinement in Italy. Since the beginning of 1935 the import of oil into Italy had been regulated by means of a licence system. At the same time she sought control of sources of crude oil. In the middle of August 1935 it was given to be understood that Italian interests had obtained control of Mosul Oil Fields, Limited, a company owning the whole share capital of British Oil Development, which in turn owned a concession in 'Irâq covering 45,000 square miles.'<sup>3</sup> The A.G.I.P. (Azienda Generale Italiana Petroli), a quasi-state concern, extended its participation in an important Rumanian oil-producing company, and through a subsidiary undertook the development of oil-fields in Albania.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, by far the greatest fraction of Italy's oil needs was supplied by foreign-controlled sources. In 1934, she imported

<sup>1</sup> See p. 274, above.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 275 *seqq.*, above.

<sup>3</sup> A law-suit in the English courts in 1936 exposed a triple claim to options on shares of Mosul Oil Fields—by the Egyptian Government, by a Dutch company and by the Azienda Generale Italiana Petroli. On the 11th August, 1936, it was announced that the A.G.I.P. had disposed of its interests in Mosul Oil Fields to an international group associated with the 'Irâq Petroleum Company.

<sup>4</sup> It was announced on the 23rd March, 1936, that the Italian Government would make a loan of 10,000,000 gold francs, at 1 per cent., to the Albanian Government, over a period of five years, for the development of agriculture, the loan to be guaranteed by oil concessions. This was the largest of several loans made at that period, which, in effect, put Albania into Italy's pocket.



1,824,000 metric tons of petroleum products of all kinds (crude oil, petrol, kerosene, residual products and lubricating oil), of which 633,000 came from Rumania, 403,000 from the U.S.S.R., 221,000 from Iran, 187,000 from the Netherlands Empire, 95,000 from Colombia and Venezuela, 72,000 from France, and 187,000 from the United States.<sup>1</sup> It will be noted that supplies from the United States (the principal oil producer outside the League circle) amounted to barely 10 per cent. by quantity of Italy's total imports of oil and oil products; indeed, in the first nine months of 1935 the proportion fell to 6·3 per cent. Since, however, on paper the capacity of the United States to meet Italy's requirements in these commodities was almost indefinitely expansible, she was commonly regarded as the key to the situation. In a public statement on the 21st November Mr. Ickes, Secretary of the Interior and Federal Oil Controller, notified American oil producers that they 'ought to comply both in the letter and in the spirit with the United States Government's efforts to prevent furnishing war materials to either of the belligerents'. Here again, however, he had no executive authority in the matter, and by January 1936, when the matter again came forward at Geneva, American opinion had hardened against indirect assistance to League sanctions, for reasons that have been already mentioned. The episode of the Laval-Hoare Plan seemed, moreover, to have undermined the determination of the League Powers themselves.

On the 22nd January the Committee of Eighteen decided to set up a committee of experts on the technical aspects of the proposed extension of the export embargo to oil and its derivatives.<sup>2</sup> The committee's main conclusions,<sup>3</sup> presented on the 12th February, were as follows:

1. Having regard to the stocks already accumulated in Italy, *en route*, the embargo would not become fully effective for three to three and a half months.

2. If the embargo were applied by all League members it would be effective, provided that the United States limited its exports to Italy to their normal pre-1935 level; otherwise, the only effect on Italy would be to render the purchase of petroleum more difficult and expensive.

3. The embargo would be strengthened if it were extended to cover

<sup>1</sup> Figures taken from the *Report of the Committee of Experts for the Technical Examination of the Conditions Governing the Trade in and Transport of Petroleum and its Derivatives, By-Products and Residues* (League of Nations Document: General, 1936, 1; British White Paper *Omd.* 5094 of 1936), Appendix I, reproducing Italian import statistics. See also p. 276 above.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 330, above.

<sup>3</sup> For extracts from the text of the report see pp. 331-4, above.

industrial alcohol and benzol, which to a certain extent were possible substitutes for motor spirit.

4. An embargo on the transport of petrol to Italy would likewise require the co-operation of non-League Powers in order to be fully effective; its most practicable form would be a ban, not only on the movement of tankers to Italy, but also on the sale of tankers to non-sanctionist states.

5. Suitable measures would have to be taken to prevent traffic by indirect routes, especially through free ports.

At the meeting of the Committee of Eighteen at Geneva on the 2nd March, Mr. Eden declared that, having considered the findings of the experts' report, His Majesty's Government were in favour of the imposition of an oil embargo by the members of the League, and were prepared to join in the early application of such a sanction if the other principal supplying and transporting states who were League members were prepared to do likewise.<sup>1</sup> Although this declaration made no reference to the United States, and included no conditions regarding the participation of non-member states in the embargo, the British Government must have been confirmed and strengthened in their decision by the action of President Roosevelt on the 1st March in renewing his appeal to American exporters to restrain their sales to the belligerents.<sup>2</sup> He said:

It is clear to me that greatly to exceed [a normal trade] basis, with the result of earning profits not possible during peace, and especially with the result of giving actual assistance to the carrying on of war, would serve to magnify the very evil of war which we seek to prevent. This being my view, I renew the appeal made last October to the American people that they so conduct trade with belligerent nations that it cannot be said that they are seizing new opportunities for profit or that by changing their peace-time trade they give aid to the continuation of war.

However, the decision of the Committee of Eighteen was again postponed, partly because both Italy and Abyssinia accepted in principle a proposal for fresh efforts towards peace, partly because the re-militarization of the Rhineland intervened to distract the League Powers and sap their will to impose further sanctions upon Italy. The oil sanction was never adopted, nor were any other sanctions beyond those originally accepted as the first stage of collective economic pressure.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See p. 338, above.

<sup>2</sup> See also p. 248 above.

<sup>3</sup> See pp. 469-74 and 482-514, below, for the decision of the British and other Governments to abandon sanctions in consequence of Italy's military victory, and for the proceedings at the session of the League Assembly which was opened on the 30th June, 1936.

## (e) SANCTIONS AND WORLD TRADE

Meanwhile the war and the economic and financial sanctions had had wide repercussions on world trade and finance. The first effect of the war scare was to create a small boom in commodities, combined with an equally sharp slump in security values. The *Economist* index of the sterling prices of primary products rose by 8.2 per cent. between the 17th July and the 9th October, 1935, and this was significantly not accompanied, as had been previous rises in the price of commodities expressed in sterling, by an equivalent fall in the gold value of the pound. Between the 14th August and the 9th October the London price of copper (standard cash) rose from £31 17s. 6d. to £35 16s. 3d. per ton; of lead from £15 15s. to £19 2s. 6d. per ton; of tin (standard cash) from £211 to £229 5s. per ton, of American cotton from 6.44d. to 6.51d. per lb.; of rubber from 5 $\frac{11}{16}$ d. to 5 $\frac{15}{16}$ d. per lb., of wheat (December future) from 5s. 1d. to 6s. 5d. per 100 lb. The imminence of the war, however, was not alone—and perhaps not chiefly—accountable for these changes; for the underlying conditions of supply, stocks and demand were favourable to improvements of price in most commodity markets. In an opposite sense, the general nervousness was quickly reflected in stock markets. In London, between the 16th August and the 20th September, 2 $\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. Consols lost 4 $\frac{3}{4}$  points, Austrian 4 $\frac{1}{2}$  per cents. lost 10 $\frac{1}{2}$  points, and Italian 20-year bonds dropped from 82 to 50. Industrial stocks reinforced the slump in bonds, particularly heavy losses being shown by oil shares. Anglo-Iranian shares, for instance, fell during that interval from 66s. 3d. to 58s. 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. (the transitory nature of this recession is shown by the fact that on the 6th May, 1936, when the Abyssinian war was being brought to an end, the market price of Anglo-Iranian shares was 93s. 9d.). In August 1935 a brisk market developed in insurance on war risks on shipping voyages, not only to the Mediterranean but also to other parts of the world. At the end of September Lloyds set up a committee to fix rates for such risks, and its first list quoted 5s. per cent. on cargo and 2s. 6d. per cent. on specie on all voyages to, from or via the Mediterranean and/or the Red Sea. Since the rate on cargoes to Australasia, India or the Far East via the Cape was fixed at only 1s. 6d. per cent., the extra premium for the Suez Canal route was sufficient to divert a good deal of cargo liner and tramp traffic to the longer route. This did something to offset the gain of traffic to the Suez Canal through the movements of Italian troopers and supply ships. The total traffic passing through the Canal in 1935 amounted to 32,811,000 net tons, an increase of more than three per cent. compared

with 1934, and the highest yearly figure ever recorded except in 1929. But the abnormal movements between Italy and East Africa were held responsible for no less than 4,000,000 net tons of the total, and if this amount were deducted the year 1935 would have been one of the least favourable in the past decade. The Cape route was stated to have gained 300,000 tons in 1934-5 at the expense of Sucz. But even more important adverse forces were the decline in Russian sales in the Far East, the opening of the 'Irāq pipe-lines, and intensified import restrictions in Europe.

The general effect of sanctions on world trade is not easily discernible on so short a view, and the economic historian's difficulties are increased by the cessation of Italian official statistics after September 1935. The major economic measures of collective pressure did not go into force until the 18th November, and numerous outstanding contracts and cargoes already *en route*, many of them abnormal transactions designed to forestall sanctions, protracted the former régime of trade with Italy beyond the appointed day. British statistics show a decline of four per cent. in imports from Italy, and a decline of seventy-two per cent. in exports to that country, in the last three months of 1935 compared with the same quarter of 1934. In the first quarter of 1936, compared with the same period in the previous year, British imports from Italy had fallen from £2,068,000 to £62,000, and exports to Italy had fallen from £2,416,000 to £110,000. The effect of the disturbance to trade was naturally felt with varying severity in different areas—for instance, South Wales almost entirely lost the export trade in coal to Italy, and the south-east of France suffered more than other quarters from the partial interruption of its normally close economic relations with its neighbour. One of the countries to lose most was Yugoslavia, one-fifth of whose exports went ordinarily to Italy. Her prospective loss of exports on account of sanctions was reckoned at 500,000,000 to 600,000,000 dinars a year, out of an annual total of approximately 4,000,000,000. In recognition of Yugoslavia's peculiar difficulties, the British Government, acting under the fifth proposal of the Co-ordination Committee (mutual support), enlarged that country's permissible quota for the import of bacon, eggs and poultry, a concession that was reckoned to be worth 100,000,000 dinars of trade per annum. Apart from the actual loss of exports, Yugoslavia found it increasingly difficult to obtain payment for those that she still preserved. At the end of 1935 the Italo-Yugoslav clearing balance, then in suspense, showed a debit of 175,000,000 dinars against Italy. To quite a considerable extent Italy was using this kind of reluctant credit to finance her im-

ports. Thus the Italo-Hungarian clearing showed such a large balance in favour of Hungary at the end of 1935 that she was able to repay the Italian *tranche*, amounting to 22,000,000 lire, of the \$20,000,000 rediscount credit granted by various central banks through the Bank for International Settlements in June 1931. Austrian exporters were reported to be showing considerable hesitation in dealing with Italy because of the delay in obtaining payment in schillings; and difficulties likewise stood in the way of Italian trade with the greatest of European countries outside the sanctions group, Germany. In October the German-Italian clearing showed a debit of nearly 20,000,000 lire against Italy, whereas formerly it had been Germany who was on the wrong side of the balance. By the end of the sanctions period it was reckoned that Italy's outstanding commercial debt had mounted to 1,500,000,000 lire.

Great Britain's experience was exceptional. Partly, no doubt, because Italian opinion was inflamed against her as the alleged promoter of the sanctions policy at Geneva, her exports to Italy fell far more sharply in the latter months of 1935 than did her imports from Italy. The Anglo-Italian clearing agreement, which went into operation on the 18th March, 1935, had established a lira account for sums due to British creditors and awaiting transfer into sterling. On the 11th September the amount outstanding in the lira account was £2,008,233; on the 18th December it had fallen to £1,608,472. Shortly before the economic sanctions went into force the British Government altered the character of the exchange clearing, making it compulsory instead of voluntary for British debtors to pay into the clearing account the sums due in sterling to Italian exporters or shipping companies; this measure indicated a certain anxiety lest the sterling assets of the account should not be sufficient to pay the commercial debts due from Italy to British exporters. A controller of Anglo-Italian debts was appointed to supervise the compulsory clearing. The figures already quoted show that after the end of the year sanctions and the Italian boycott combined to reduce Great Britain's trade with Italy to insignificant amounts, both in imports and in exports. An export balance of £348,000 in the first three months of 1935 was reduced to one of £48,000 in the corresponding period of 1936.

#### (f) THE EFFECT OF THE WAR IN ITALY

It is never easy to gauge the economic condition of a country at war, and in this instance the task is rendered the more difficult by the absence of authoritative Italian figures later than September

1935. But even the figures relating to the period immediately before the outbreak of war give a fairly trustworthy indication of the trend of economic events in the last three months of 1935. The gold holding of the Bank of Italy, which had dropped by over 2,000,000,000 lire between the end of 1933 and the middle of August 1935, lost a further 723,000,000 lire in the seven weeks to the 20th September, when it stood at 4,334,000,000 lire. The comparatively small reserve of foreign currencies also fell slightly. But this loss of reserves was accompanied by no equivalent reduction of the obligations of the Bank; on the contrary, between the 20th August and the 20th September discounts rose from 3,622,000,000 to 4,420,000,000 lire, advances from 1,900,000,000 to 2,630,000,000 lire, and notes in circulation from 13,491,000,000 to 14,917,000,000 lire. The ratio of gold cover to notes and sight liabilities simultaneously fell from thirty-six per cent. to under thirty per cent.—so swiftly had events moved since the statutory minimum of forty per cent. was removed at the end of July. As a natural consequence of the restrictions on foreign trade and the inflation of the currency, prices rose steeply. The index of wholesale prices (1913 = 100), which had started the year at a level of 280, had risen to 319 by August, and in October it was 352, over twenty-five per cent. higher than it had been nine months previously. The index of retail prices (January–June 1914 = 100) rose more slowly, but in August it stood at 433, an advance of 12 points on the figure for the previous January.

The increase in Bank of Italy advances and in the note circulation was in large measure caused by the fiscal necessities of the Government. The ordinary budget was in no worse plight, it is true, than in previous years. The final figures for the year ended the 30th June, 1935, showed a deficit of 2,030,000,000 lire, of which 975,000,000 lire were attributable to extraordinary expenditure in East Africa, 840,000,000 lire to a grant in aid of the state railways, and only 215,000,000 lire to the ordinary budget. In 1935–6, so the Minister for Finance declared to a meeting of the Cabinet on the 20th December, 1935, there would be no deficit on the state railways; and the budget for the current year would close with a surplus of 20,000,000 lire on an expenditure of 20,291,000,000 lire. It was remarkable that the estimates for revenue in 1935–6 showed an increase of no less than 2,314,000,000 lire compared with the previous year; the Minister apparently relied on the general improvement in internal trade and profits, and on a series of new decrees designed to check evasion of taxes.

Even if his apparent optimism was justified, however, there remained the problem of paying for the Abyssinian war. The outlay

of 975,000,000 lire included in the budget to the 30th June, 1935—over three months before hostilities actually began—gave some inkling of the enormous expenditures that were bound to ensue. As early as the 23rd August, 1935, additional expenditures totalling 2,500,000,000 lire were announced 'for extraordinary requirements in the colonies and for services in connexion therewith'. The total included 1,000,000,000 lire for the Ministry for the Colonies 'to provide for new or increased civil and military expenditure' and 1,050,000,000 lire for the Ministry of War, as an 'extraordinary appropriation for services in the interests of the colonies.' There were constant rumours of impending increases of taxation, of a capital levy or similar measures, but the Minister for Finance discredited these reports, and the separation of war expenditure from the ordinary budget indicated that the Government proposed to finance military operations by loans rather than from current revenue. The principal method of raising new money was the conversion of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. redeemable Government stock into 5 per cent. Consols. Holders were invited to take out 100 lire of the new funds, which were guaranteed against future conversions for twenty years, in exchange for 100 lire of the  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. stock and 15 lire in cash. As the total amount of the redeemable stock outstanding was about 61,000,000,000 lire, conversion of the whole issue would give the Government 9,000,000,000 lire of new money. Up to the beginning of 1936 some 5,000,000,000 to 6,000,000,000 lire had actually been received in this way, and in September 1936 it was reported that conversions had totalled 45,000,000,000 lire, giving the Government 6,750,000,000 lire of new money. The time limit for conversions had been extended to the 30th September. The offer was attractive to investors who could lay hands on the necessary cash, but it must be noted that the Government was paying in effect 10 per cent. per annum for the new money. The transaction may also be looked at in this way: since the market price of the  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. stock was under 65, the investor was being invited to subscribe to a 5 per cent. consolidated loan at less than 80, and on this reckoning the Italian Government's internal credit was on a  $6\frac{1}{4}$  per cent. basis. Further funds were obtained by the Treasury through the resale of foreign securities compulsorily exchanged by private holders for 5 per cent. Government bonds, described as 'unquoted and unsaleable'.<sup>1</sup>

Italy's anxiety to secure gold in order to replenish her currency reserves and obtain the means to purchase goods abroad was exhibited in many ways, of which the most remarkable to the popular

<sup>1</sup> *The Economist*, 12th September, 1936.

eye—but perhaps the least important in actual substance—was the exchange of gold for steel wedding rings. On the 19th November a Royal Decree established a monopoly in the purchase of gold in all forms from abroad, and jewellers and private citizens were forbidden to buy any raw gold or second-hand gold articles whose value was determined by the gold content. On the 27th November the Bank of Italy raised its buying price for gold from Italian citizens to 15.50 lire per gramme, against a rate of 12.63 lire per gramme based on the nominal gold parity of the lira. This was, in effect, a frank acknowledgement that the lira was off gold.

In spite of all efforts, the metallic reserves of the Bank of Italy fell with alarming rapidity. On the 20th October, the last date for which a full return was given, the gold reserves amounted to 3,936,000,000 lire; at the annual meeting of the Bank of Italy on the 31st March, 1936, the Governor stated that by the 31st December they had fallen to 3,027,000,000 lire. The import statistics of France and Switzerland for the last three months of 1935 showed the entry of gold from Italy to the aggregate amount of approximately 1,500,000,000 lire at mint parity. The Bank of Italy's reserves, according to the statement already quoted and the return for the 30th September, fell in that period by 1,224,000,000. The discrepancy might be partly due to variations in the date or methods of compilation of the figures, but it may be supposed that some part of the extra quarter of a billion odd was acquired by the Bank of Italy from miscellaneous sources. The Governor of the Bank, however, was careful to point out that the reserves as stated did not include the gold given to the state by the citizens of Italy, nor the foreign securities that had been requisitioned. The sums thus obtained would form, he said, a strong special reserve which would remain at the exclusive disposal of the state. In the first three months of 1936, according to the results of a questionnaire issued by the League of Nations, imports of gold from Italy or Italian colonies into the countries that replied totalled 1,092,000,000 lire. Thus the ordinary gold reserves of Italy must have fallen during this period alone by one-third of their amount at the beginning of the year.

The gold received from Italian citizens could hardly have exceeded three-quarters of a billion lire. In addition to their gold the Italian Government could also dispose of silver called in from circulation or voluntarily relinquished by the people—worth perhaps half a billion—and of the foreign securities called in from private holders. The value of these was a matter for estimate, but well-informed



opinion suggested that two milliards was the maximum figure for the marketable and realizable assets.<sup>1</sup> The experience of the British Government during the war of 1914-18, when the American exchange was similarly supported by the mobilization of privately held foreign securities, showed that only a comparatively small proportion of a country's capital abroad could be readily disposed of, in any considerable quantities, in time of war.

If these amounts are added up, Italy's disposable international assets at the end of September 1935 may be estimated at a maximum figure of 7,870,000,000 lire, including 370,000,000 lire in the ordinary foreign exchange reserve of the Bank of Italy. Known losses of gold amounted to roughly one-third of that total (2,600,000,000 lire) during the subsequent six months. No figures were available at the date of writing to show how far the assets other than gold were simultaneously depleted; attention has already been drawn to the accumulation of debts against Italy in her clearing accounts with Central and Eastern European countries. The supposition that if the war had been protracted over the rainy season of 1936 the pressure of sanctions would have driven Italy to a compromise seemed, therefore, to have been justified, in so far as what happened to Italy's balance of payments during those first six months of the war could be taken as likely to continue for the next six months. The pressure, indeed, would probably have been intensified, for the stocks of raw materials that had been accumulated in preparation for the war were seriously depleted by the time when the sanctions were withdrawn.

Italy herself claimed that through the readjustment of her import trade she had actually achieved a smaller debit balance on commodity trade since the imposition of sanctions than she had experienced a year previously. The average monthly debit for December 1935 to March 1936 was stated by the Minister of Finance, in a speech on the 19th May, to have been 213,000,000 lire, against 246,000,000 lire in the corresponding period of 1934-5. If these figures are accepted it follows, having regard to the unquestioned loss of gold by Italy during the war, either that her external trade was already seriously out of balance in 1934-5,<sup>2</sup> or that her losses in shipping and tourist traffic and other miscellaneous receipts more than made up for her success in reducing her imports to match the fall in her exports, or

<sup>1</sup> See two articles on 'Italy under Sanctions' in *The Manchester Guardian* for the 28th February and the 2nd March, 1936.

<sup>2</sup> She actually lost more gold in the first three months of 1935 than in the first three months of 1936.

that she was paying out money for heavy items not included in the trade returns cited by the Minister of Finance—for instance, war materials and stores shipped direct to the war area. The most likely guess is that all these possibilities had some effect on the figures. What is certain is that the adjustment of the trade balance was achieved only by a serious depletion of industrial stocks, especially of the commodities banned for export to Italy under Sanction No. 4. In November 1935 Italy's imports of rubber, iron ore and scrap iron, aluminium and tin were far in excess of her normal purchases. But in the following month her imports of those commodities had been reduced to a tiny fraction of their usual amounts (except aluminium, which continued to be shipped in abnormally large quantities in December and January). In February exports of those commodities from the thirty-eight states making returns to the League of Nations (including Germany, Austria, Hungary and Switzerland) had vanished altogether, and their sales of nickel had been cut to very small amounts. Ordinary Italian industry could not indefinitely undergo these deprivations, together with the others implied in the great curtailment of imports.

The returns show clearly the delay that ensued before the economic sanctions had their full effect. The 'import sanction' likewise took a slow grip. The following table shows the value of the imports from Italy into the countries that supplied the required information to the League, from November 1935 onwards:

#### IMPORTS FROM ITALY

(in thousands of gold pounds)

<i>Month</i>	<i>No. of countries</i>	<i>1934-5</i>	<i>1935-6</i>
November . . .	58	4,428	5,304
December . . .	57	4,423	3,525
January . . .	66	4,040	2,087
February . . .	61	3,943	1,777
March . . .	37	3,611	1,907

Fully one-half of the imports from Italy in February and March 1936 were imports into European countries not applying sanctions or applying them with reservations. The figures indicate that although there may have been substantial evasions of the undertaking to impose sanctions they did not have any drastic effect on the general trend.

Between January 1935 and January 1936 imports from Italy into France fell from 1,389,000 gold dollars to 159,000 gold dollars, and into the United Kingdom from 1,942,000 gold dollars to 70,000 gold

dollars. On the side of exports to Italy, there was a sharp contrast between most of the sanctionist countries and the non-sanctionists, especially the United States, Austria and Hungary, who gained considerably in trade at the expense of the former group. The U.S.S.R. and Rumania, however, increased their exports to Italy through their heavy shipments of oil

Not only the restriction of Italian exports under sanctions, the stoppage of imports of rubber and other industrial raw materials, and the practical cessation of tourist traffic, but also the heavy requirements of industries producing war material, and the demands of the military operations themselves, intensified the pressure on Italy's internal economy. The automobile industry was reported to have been completely dislocated by the attenuation of oil supplies to the general public, while other industries, like textiles and building, felt severely the pinch of curtailed supplies of raw materials. On the 23rd March, 1936, Signor Mussolini announced to the annual assembly of Fascist Corporations a sweeping plan of industrial nationalization. The state would encourage the small trader and the artisan, he said.

As for the great industry which works, directly or indirectly, for the defence of the nation, and has formed its capital from public subscriptions, and the industry which has developed to such an extent as to be capitalistic or super-capitalistic, it will be formed into great units corresponding to what are called key industries. It will assume a special character in the framework of the state. Is state intervention in these units to take the form of direct or of indirect control? In some branches it may be direct operation, in others indirect operation

We may also think of fixed undertakings in which the state and private enterprise will supply the capital and will organize the operation in common. It is perfectly logical that in the Fascist state these groups of industries should cease to have by law the character of private undertakings, which since 1930-1 they have altogether lost in fact. . . . We are moving towards a period in which these industries will have neither the time nor the power to work for the private consumer. They must work exclusively, or almost exclusively, for the armed forces of the nation.

The main consideration in Italy's economic policy, declared Signor Mussolini, would be to free the country from dependence on foreign countries for raw materials. For supplies of petrol, for instance, they would increasingly rely, especially in time of war, on the hydrogenation of lignite, on alcohol obtained from agricultural products, and on the distillation of asphaltiferous rock. The existing Chamber of Deputies would be replaced as soon as possible by the National Assembly of Corporations.

This promise—or threat—of wholesale industrial reorganization, which was generally regarded outside Italy as necessitated by the stringencies of an economic régime under sanctions, was associated with an equally drastic reorganization of the Italian banking system. On the 3rd March, 1936, the Council of Ministers decided upon a policy of nationalization of the banks. Public institutions would take over from private investors the ownership of the Bank of Italy and of all the chief subsidiary banks of the country. Shareholders would be repaid at rates corresponding to actual values. Smaller banks, together with credit institutions like the Institution of Land Credit and the Institution of Public Works Credit, would be rigorously controlled by a board composed of the Ministers of Finance, Agriculture and Corporations, with Signor Mussolini as President. The Industrial Reconstruction Institution was to be abolished. Thenceforward all new public issues of capital made through banks or credit institutions would be subject to direct veto or approval by the Bank of Italy. There could have been no clearer evidence than these subjections of private enterprise to the purposes—and largely the military purposes—of the state that sanctions were having their effect upon Italy's whole economy. The adjustment of her balance of trade, so as to minimize her loss of gold and exchange reserves, could not compensate for the loss of export markets (which might well prove permanent), the shortage of raw materials and the inflated level of costs and prices.

### (xiii) The Reactions in the Sanction-taking Countries to the Italian Military Victory in Africa

Next to the Amharas and the Italians, who were the respective victims and instruments of Signor Mussolini's military *coup* in Africa, the effect of the blow was felt by the people and the Government of the United Kingdom more keenly, perhaps, than by any other members of an oecumenical society in which none could remain altogether unmoved by the formidable shock which the Italian dictator had now given to the frail structure of international law and order.

Since all human conflicts are in essence of a spiritual nature, even when the moral struggle is reflected on the material surface of life in a clash of arms or in a cloud of poison, the forum of public opinion in Great Britain perhaps presented no smaller a claim than the theatre of war in East Africa upon the attention of a historian who was attempting to follow, and describe, the course of a battle which was being fought on every plane of human activity with all the

weapons of the spirit, as well as with those of the flesh, and which had the appearance of being momentous for the destinies of Mankind.

In Great Britain the months of May and June 1936 witnessed the third round of a struggle of which the first round had been fought in August and September 1935 and the second in the intervening December. In both these earlier trials of moral strength the cause of collective security had been—at least in outward appearance—victorious, but this time that cause suffered an equally conspicuous defeat. As soon as the battle was rejoined it became clear that the current of feeling was running in favour of abandoning the attempt to frustrate the Italian act of aggression; and those leaders who had carried the public with them eight months and four months back were now overborne and swept away by the tide as helplessly—however manfully they might breast the welling waves—as their opponents had been discomfited on those two earlier occasions. This rout of the ‘sanctionists’ on the battle-field of the press eventually reached a point at which the Government felt themselves strong enough to declare their policy: first on the 10th June through the mouth of Mr. Neville Chamberlain, who was ‘sent forth’ as ‘a raven which went forth to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth’,<sup>1</sup> and then, on the 18th, through the mouth of Mr. Anthony Eden, in the guise of the dove bearing an olive leaf<sup>2</sup> which—plucked as it plainly was from an Italian tree—made it evident to Mr. Baldwin and his anxious companions in the rudderless ark of the Covenant ‘that the waters were abated from off the earth’, and that the hard-boiled crust of traditional diplomatic practice could be trodden now once more by politicians’ feet without bringing down another deluge of public indignation.

Why was it that, this time, the fortunes of this spiritual war were reversed? For, as far as the sum, or balance, of public opinion could be tested by individual expressions of it, there were still as many righteous men and women in the cities of Britain—now perhaps threatened, like the Cities of the Plain, with brimstone and fire out of heaven—as there had been in the two earlier moral crises of the Ethiopian test of British faith. On this point the following testimony was given in the House of Commons at Westminster, during a debate on the 23rd June, 1936, by the leader of the Liberal Opposition, Sir Archibald Sinclair:

I have had double or treble the number of letters, post-cards and telegrams during this crisis that I had at the crisis of the Hoare-Laval negotiations, a very large number from people who tell me they voted

<sup>1</sup> Genesis, viii. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Genesis, viii. 11.

for the Government, and implied that they did so on the strength of the pledge that the Government gave on the issue of the League of Nations at the last election

This testimony from Sir Archibald Sinclair is borne out by extracts from the post-bag of another Member of Parliament which are printed in a selection of expressions of feeling and opinion in Great Britain that was published in June 1936;<sup>1</sup> and the same emotions and views and desires appear in two other series of extracts printed in the same collection—one series from the correspondence files of the Abyssinia Association,<sup>2</sup> and the other from letters to the Viscountess Gladstone accompanying donations in response to an appeal for a Red Cross aeroplane for Abyssinia.<sup>3</sup> Why was it, then, that the same integers produced a plus quantity in 1935 and a minus quantity in 1936?

Perhaps the most important among the several considerations which, together, explain this apparent inconsequence, is to be found in the fact that the *fait accompli* of the Italian military conquest of the Ethiopian Empire made it impossible any longer for anybody in any of the sanction-taking countries to shut his eyes to the impossibility of effectively frustrating Italy's act of aggression if the would-be vindicator of the League Covenant were not prepared now to take the main burden upon the shoulders of his own country and his own self.

By the terms of the Covenant this was the plain responsibility of states members of the League as soon as a breach of the Covenant had duly come to their cognizance; but the reaction in Great Britain to the news of the Italian military triumph at the beginning of May 1936 made it evident that at any rate a majority of the members of the Cabinet of the United Kingdom and of their supporters in Parliament had been counting all along upon the physiography of the Abyssinian Plateau or the climate and weather of East Africa or the martial qualities of the ill-equipped Amharan warriors to do the major part of the business which was the bounden duty of Abyssinia's fellow states members of the League. While, so long as hostilities lasted in the theatre of war, the Governments of the United Kingdom and the other sanction-taking countries had been prone to deprecate any intensification of sanctions on the ground that those originally imposed seemed likely to be sufficient for their purpose, the military

<sup>1</sup> See *The Tragedy of Abyssinia: What Britain feels and thinks and wants*, edited by E. Rathbone (London, 1936, League of Nations Union), pp. 43-4. The name of the recipient of the letters is not disclosed.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 40-2.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 36-9.

collapse of Abyssinia at the beginning of May brought to light the truth that the British Government, at least, had never regarded sanctions as being more than a subsidiary means towards the end of thwarting Signor Mussolini and saving Abyssinia and maintaining the Covenant. The British Government's own immediate conclusion now was that the military *fait accompli* in Africa had made the continuation of sanctions against Italy futile. And it is significant that, in eventually announcing their decision to recommend at Geneva that the existing financial and economic sanctions should be abandoned, they did not think it worth while to present to the British public any estimate of the extent to which these existing sanctions had impeded Italy's action up to date, or again any estimate of the length of time for which these sanctions would have to be in force before they might be expected to bring Signor Mussolini to his knees. The attitude of the British Government was, in fact, accurately presented by one of their supporters in the House of Commons, Mr. Macquisten, in a laconic interruption of Mr. Lloyd George's speech on the 18th June: 'As the Abyssinians are defeated, sanctions must go.'

When the Government were thus unwilling even to look into the question of what results might be expected from the existing economic sanctions if these were given time to tell, they must have been unwilling, *a fortiori*, to complete their hitherto partial fulfilment of their obligations under Article 16 of the Covenant by resorting to additional measures which might bring to bear upon Signor Mussolini so effective a pressure as to incline him to retort by going to war. And the argument that war alone could reverse the *fait accompli* in East Africa was played again and again as a trump card by the Government at Westminster in their apologia, at this stage, for the failure of the United Kingdom and her fellow states members of the League to frustrate the aggressor and to rescue his victim. The issue was stated frankly by Mr. Eden himself in the House of Commons on the 18th June:

The fact has to be faced that sanctions did not realize the purpose for which they were imposed. The Italian military campaign succeeded. The capital and the most important part of Abyssinia are in Italian military occupation; and, so far as I am aware, no Abyssinian Government survives in any part of the Emperor's territory. That is a situation which has got to be faced. It is a situation which nothing but military action from without—from outside the country—can possibly reverse. Is there any country prepared to take such military action? Or is there any section of opinion in this country prepared to take such military action?

In the same place, on the 23rd June, Sir John Simon said the same thing in a more shocking language:

I do not think there is a single member of the League which is prepared to use force, and I say quite bluntly that this Government is not prepared to invite this country to engage itself by force in that quarrel. Very ridiculous things have been said in that connexion by some critics. It has been implied with a sneer: 'Are you afraid? Do you think the British Navy would be overwhelmed?' I have no doubt the British Navy would give a good account of itself, but that is not the point. The point is that, with the present situation in Europe and the great dangers surrounding us here at home, I am not prepared to see a single ship sunk even in a successful naval battle in the cause of Abyssinian independence.

Outside the walls of the House of Commons the point had already been reasserted by Mr. Baldwin in a speech delivered at Wishaw on the 20th June:

In my view, there is only one way of altering the course of events as they have so far taken place, and that is to go to war. I do not know a single country in Europe that is prepared for that, and I am quite certain that I should not cast my voice to-day for that course of action. . . . We are making every attempt, whatever people may say and however much they may talk about loss of prestige, to keep our people, certainly unless the whole of the League nations will come in with us, away from the perils and horrors of modern war in Europe. If that fire is ever lighted again on the Continent no man can tell where the heather will stop burning, and it is not a risk that I, for one, am going to take for my country so long as I have any control in the Government.

Mr. Baldwin was followed by Mr. Neville Chamberlain at Manchester on the 27th June:

There is only one sanction which could to-day have any effect at all upon the course of things in Abyssinia, and that is force, and force means war. Mr. Lloyd George himself told us in the House of Commons that, in his opinion, this country would never march to war in an Austrian quarrel. Does he suggest that we should do for Abyssinia what we would not do for Austria? Does he suggest that we should enter upon a war the end of which no man could see; that we should expose our people to the risk of those horrors which so shocked us when they were applied to Abyssinia?

The Prime Minister himself returned to the charge on the 2nd July at the centenary dinner of the City of London Conservative Association:

You may not know that every day of my life, when I sit at my work in the Cabinet room, I sit underneath the portrait of a great Prime Minister—the first who bore that title—Sir Robert Walpole, whose great boast—and much of whose great reputation rested on this—was that,



except on one occasion, he kept his country out of war. There was every kind of intrigue against him to try and get him to break that resolution of his, and to him was attributed that well-known remark that a war against his will had been forced on him, and he said that the people were now ringing the bells and they would soon be wringing their hands.

War is a very terrible thing, and when once let loose in Europe no man can tell how far it will spread and no man can tell when or how it will stop. And I am quite content in these circumstances to be called a coward if I have done what I could in accordance with the views of every country in Europe to keep my own people out of war.

In the more heated passages of the two debates in the House of Commons on the 18th and on the 23rd June, 'Do you want war?' was the cry which was volleyed at the Government's critics by the supporters of the Government on the back benches.<sup>1</sup>

At the time of writing, it remained for the Opposition and the electorate to prove that, in making this fundamental assumption that the British nation was unwilling to go to war for the sake of implementing its obligations under the League Covenant in the Italo-Abyssinian conflict, the spokesmen of the Government were libellously misinterpreting the general will of the electorate. There were, indeed, two opposition speakers—Mr. Lloyd George on the 18th June and Mr. A. Henderson on the 23rd—who had the courage to declare in the House of Commons that they were prepared, in vindication of the Covenant, to go to war if necessary.

Unless [said Mr. Lloyd George] it means that [i.e. war] in the ultimate resort, the League will have no authority. I think it will avert war all the more if this is known.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The continued prevalence of a corresponding state of mind in France—after, no less than before, the change of Government in that country—was attested by the new French Prime Minister, Monsieur Blum, in the following passage of the speech which he delivered in the Assembly at Geneva on the 1st July, 1936:

'The will of the nation . . . is clear: the French people desire peace; and desire it unanimously. They desire it so deeply that in our domestic controversies the conclusive argument of the parties, one against the other, consists in saying: "You are endangering the cause of peace; you are drawing the nation into war."'

<sup>2</sup> This declaration of Mr. Lloyd George's at the beginning of his speech must, however, be read in the light of the following later passage which is the more significant because it was incidental and indeed almost inadvertent:

'I am trying to find out your reasons for changing your mind. Austria? Well, Austria is always with us, always full of trouble. But there is one thing the people of this country have made up their minds definitely about. Whatever Government is in power they will never go to war again for an Austrian quarrel. [Interruption.] I am just telling you what my conviction is about the feeling of the country, and there is not one of you can deny it.'—Hon. Members: 'Abyssinia!'—'Yes. But you have accepted sanctions for Abyssinia.'

I can only speak for myself [said Mr. Henderson], but, for what it is worth, I can state my own position. I believe that any one who supports the collective peace system, as set out in the Covenant of the League of Nations, has to be prepared to face all the consequences naturally flowing from the enforcement of the Covenant against an aggressor nation.

On the other hand, Mr. Arthur Greenwood, who led the Labour Opposition's attack upon the Government on the 18th, twice showed signs of flinching from this issue when it was thrust upon him; and in the event the Government found themselves able—without evoking a storm like that which had been raised by the Laval-Hoare Peace Plan<sup>1</sup>—to declare and execute a policy of abandoning the economic sanctions hitherto in force against Italy, and acquiescing in the triumphant success of her accomplished act of aggression, on the express ground that going to war with her was the only feasible alternative course of action.

The point had been put forcibly by Mr. Edwyn Bevan in a letter which was published in *The Times* of the 30th April:

As Captain Victor Cazalet said in your issue of the 23rd April, the League can be a success only if the nations composing it are prepared to fight. It aims at peace, but its method must in certain circumstances mean war. Just as vaccination aims at preventing small-pox by producing the disease in a milder form, so a collective war waged against a peace-breaker who will not yield to gentle treatment is very much preferable, it is held, to a war waged by a nation for its own hand. . . .

Even to-day the Powers of the League could stop Italy's aggression instantly if their peoples were willing to face war with Italy. It is an ironical reflection that the very same fear of war which won so many thousand votes for the League of Nations in what was termed a 'Peace Ballot' is the thing which paralyses the League even in face of an aggression so brutal and atrocious as the Italian.

In the second of the passages here quoted from Mr. Bevan's letter, the writer was raising the question whether, when some millions of British electors had voted, a few months back, for 'military measures if necessary' (in case 'economic and non-military measures' failed to compel a nation to stop when it had insisted upon committing an act of aggression against a neighbour), these voters had clearly understood that, in answering the series of questions in the so-called 'Peace Ballot' in the affirmative, they were voting, not for peace-at-any-price, but for war-rather-than-dishonour and for war-rather-than-lawlessness-and-iniquity. Or did these voters indeed apprehend what they were voting for, yet cast their vote, all the same, for a contingency for which they had no stomach, in the hope that 'something would

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 68-9 and 314-20, above.

turn up' to save them from the necessity of having to make the painful choice between honouring their words and eating them?

The British electorate of this generation were the children of an age in which a *ci-devant* Christian Society had come to believe that its talent for clock-work (institutional as well as metallic) could dispense it from the need of holding convictions and of summoning up the courage to act upon them when the consequences of such action were likely to be unpleasant. It is possible that, to many people in Great Britain, the newfangled institution of 'economic sanctions' had commended itself as a substitute which was both comfortable and ingenious, and thus doubly attractive, for the old-fashioned institution of war: a sort of political 'syncro-mesh' which was expected to save a civilized community the jar of the clumsy old-fashioned business of gear-changing out of peace into war and out of war into peace again. If such 'modern' souls were represented in the electorate of the United Kingdom in 1936 in any considerable numbers, that would go far to account for the Government's success in carrying through a policy of abandoning economic sanctions in face of an Italian military victory, for, in dealing with electors of this kidney, the Government had to do with men and women who were not moved by the will to vindicate a principle at the risk of being called upon to make a sacrifice, but who merely wished to make a gesture so long as they could be certain of being able to make it without seriously imperilling their own comfort.

The prevailing lack of a lively faith in ultimate spiritual principles would also explain why it was that even those people who had the intellectual ability to grasp all the disastrous implications of a surrender of the League of Nations to Signor Mussolini were not, all of them, prepared to take the hard course that must be taken if these disastrous possibilities were to be warded off. In their own utilitarian terms it was beyond their power to solve aright the moral problem that was confronting them; for these children of the Enlightenment had emancipated themselves from the discipline of a traditional and *a priori* categorical imperative,<sup>1</sup> only to fall under the yoke of the Goddess Tychê or Fortune, who, under many different names, had

<sup>1</sup> In the Liberal-Democratic ranks of the society of the day, a readiness to fight for a cause was coming to be regarded as a symptom of either criminality or lunacy. 'At all costs', Monsieur Delbos, the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, is reported to have declared in a public speech on the 3rd August, 1936, 'there must not be a new crusade of ideals in Europe, which would probably lead to war.' This declaration was made with reference, not to the Italo-Abyssinian conflict, but to the Spanish civil war, and the policy indicated may have been politically impeccable; yet, all the same, the words have a wider moral implication which tells a tale.

repeatedly established her paralysing dominion over the souls of men and women who had been called upon to live in periods of social decadence. Casting up their hedonistic calculus in order to make the choice between one evil which might be the lesser evil but which was at the same time both certain and immediate, and another evil which would manifestly be the greater evil if it were to come to pass to-morrow, these devotees of Tychê measured the possibility of 'something lucky turning up' before to-morrow dawned against the certainty of something unpleasant happening now if they chose the sterner of the two alternative courses; and in face of this fallaciously imperfect survey of the alternatives they succumbed supinely to the option of avoiding the unpleasantness that was imminent, and thus made their momentous choice neither on the absolute criterion of morality nor on the relative criterion of expediency, but on that trivial distinction between this moment and the next which keeps the sluggard cowering between the blankets when the house is burning over his head.<sup>1</sup>

If the Government sought to justify themselves by accusing the electorate of being in this unedifying state of mind, the public might perhaps make two retorts.

In the first place they might convict Mr. Baldwin, out of his own mouth, not only of having emulated his constituents in making a pretentious gesture without intending to follow it up, but of also having, himself, described and denounced in advance the very *bassesse* which he had subsequently committed in his countrymen's company and name. The following passage was included in a string of citations from his own previous utterances which Mr. Baldwin quoted, in his speech at Wishaw on the 20th June, 1936, with the intention of proving that he had not been guilty of inconsistency and had not 'misled the country'.

I said in the House of Commons two years ago,<sup>2</sup> and I beg your attention to those words. 'If you are going to adopt a sanction, you must be prepared for war. If you adopt a sanction without being ready for war, you are not an honest trustee of the nation.'

When this passage is compared with that from the Prime Minister's own subsequent speech of the 2nd July, and with those from Mr. Eden's and Sir John Simon's previous speeches—of the 18th and the 23rd June respectively—which have been quoted above, it would appear that, in making even a warrantable accusation against the

<sup>1</sup> This is, of course, the issue at stake in the last scene of Part One of Goethe's *Faust*; but in the play it is not Mephistopheles, but God, to whom Gretchen gives her allegiance at the decisive moment.

<sup>2</sup> The actual date was the 18th May, 1934 [A. J. T.].

public on these lines, the Government would be throwing stones from the loop-holes of a glass-house.

In meeting the Government's indictment, the electorate might further retort that, according to the tradition of British parliamentary politics, it was the Government's duty, not to follow public opinion, but to lead it; and they might go on to suggest that if in September or in October 1935, or even as late as January or February 1936, the Government had asked the nation for a mandate to push the British implementation of British undertakings under the Covenant to a point at which Signor Mussolini might have launched a military attack upon the British Empire, then the Government could have counted upon being able to command, for all eventualities, the loyal support of the public as well as that of the fighting services. In any case, it was manifestly open to question whether more than a small fraction of the population of the United Kingdom—a fraction which was principally, and honourably, represented by the so-called 'Christian Pacifists'—would ensue peace-at-any-price. And while it was impossible to foretell what considerations, if any, would induce the majority of the electorate to fight, the answer to this question was not obscure in the case of the 'Die-Hard' back-bench supporters of the Government in the House of Commons whose voices were raised most loudly and insistently in May and June 1936 for the abandonment of the economic sanctions then in force against Italy, on the declared ground that now, at any rate, 'economic sanctions meant war'. The British anti-sanctionists of this school were certainly not averse—as their leader would appear to have been at this time, to judge by some of his utterances above-quoted—from going to war on any account in any circumstances. They made no secret of the fact that they would readily go to war, even against a formidable Great Power or coalition of Great Powers, for the purpose of defending, by force of arms, the territorial integrity of the British Empire within its existing frontiers—not excluding the territories that were held by states members of the British Commonwealth under an international mandate.

Noting the sincerity of this will to war for this purpose in these circles, a detached observer might marvel at the apparent blindness of these ardent British Imperialists. Did they not see that, for an Englishman whose first concern was to defend the territorial integrity of the British Empire, no less than for an Englishman whose first concern was to establish the reign of law and order in international relations, a system of collective security, such as that which was embodied in the Covenant of the League of Nations, was the most

favourable formation in which to fight for his war aim, and, indeed, perhaps the only formation in which his country would have any chance at all of fighting victoriously? At the time in question this political and strategic truth had been reduced to the starkness of a truism, comprehensible to the dullest mind, thanks to the lucid and forcible expository activities, in speech and in print, of Sir Norman Angell. Why did a British faction which cared so genuinely for the preservation of the British Empire, and which found itself, at this critical moment, possessed of a whip-hand over the Government, so wantonly abandon a collective system of security which, in all probability, was the British Empire's first and last line of defence—its veritable Thermopylae or Amba Alagi?

Perhaps this puzzle may be solved<sup>1</sup> in the light of the general truth that, in the determination of human action, Reason seldom succeeds in asserting itself against Passion and Prejudice. For the rank and file of the Government's supporters of the 'Die-Hard' persuasion had allowed their hearts to be governed by an instinctive dislike for the League before they had given their heads an opportunity to consider (*more Churchilliano*) whether the League might not prove—perhaps incidentally, but none the less effectively—to be a valuable instrument for their own Imperial purposes. The attitude of these English 'Die-Hards' towards the League was, in fact, not unlike the attitude of the American 'Die-Hards' towards the policy of isolationism. Just as the American 'Die-Hards' were less powerfully moved by proofs that an American policy of totalitarian isolation would serve their own aims than by suspicions that it would incidentally benefit the League and Europe,<sup>2</sup> so the British 'Die-Hards' were perhaps blinded, by their rebellion against the prospect of being called upon to face a risk of war for the sake of the League and Abyssinia, from paying heed to the truth—which nevertheless stared them in the face—that, in making this *gran rifiuto*, they were throwing away, perhaps irretrievably, a golden opportunity, and (it might even be) a last chance, of taking up arms in defence of their beloved British Empire. This joint in the armour of some of the Government's supporters in Parliament was laid bare by the Labour Opposition spokesman, Mr. Arthur Greenwood, in the following passage of invective in his speech of the 18th June, 1936, in the House of Commons:

There must be no place for this trembling, vacillating, cowardly Government, which is leading people backward instead of forward, and

<sup>1</sup> For a brilliant ray of light upon it see an article by Sir Norman Angell himself, under the title of 'The New John Bull', in *The Political Quarterly*, vol. vii, No. 3, July–September 1936.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 95, above.

we must have a Government that sincerely believes in the possibility of an effective League of Nations, that is prepared to put that principle to the test—[Hon Members: 'How? By war?']—and a Government that is prepared to abandon what is the motive in the hearts of many Members opposite, the motive of imperialism and militarism, which animates people who are prepared to fight for any cause but the League of Nations, and who treat with levity what has been the greatest adventure in the history of Mankind, the foundation of the League of Nations. The Government now bring it into contempt, but the League will flourish when these men's names have been forgotten.

The animus against the League of Nations, of which certain Conservative Members of Parliament were thus accused by one of their political opponents, was unmistakably displayed by certain retired members of the British diplomatic service who were of an age to have formed their own philosophy of international politics, and to have allowed it to set hard, before the birth of the League in the travail of the War of 1914–18. For example, a letter of the 18th May from Lord Rennell, which was published in *The Times* of the 20th, concluded with the accusation that

The enthusiasts of the League in its present form appear not infrequently to be quite unfamiliar with its implications, anomalies, and lack of clarity, of which the actual situation as I see it seems to offer another example.

In a similar vein, Sir F. O. Lindley wrote to the editor of *The Times*, in a letter indited on the 10th June and published on the 12th, that

It would be lamentable were the Government to be terrorized into further follies by the militant wing of the League of Nations Union. There is no need to be afraid of these people, who, of all others, are the least fitted to direct the policy of this great Empire.<sup>1</sup>

Another explanation of the turn in the tide of British public opinion was offered to the writer of this *Survey* in advance by a German friend of his who was deeply versed in the mysteries of international politics and intimately acquainted, at first hand, with England and the English. Finding himself in Berlin at the moment when the news of the Italian victory at Amba Aradam reached

<sup>1</sup> By contrast, however, Sir Malcolm Robertson opened a letter, written on the 13th May and published in *The Times* on the 15th, with the thesis that 'modern barbarism has triumphed over primitive savagery', and closed it with the following peroration:

'The League must stand and, even at this late hour, exert its authority. Through no other agency can the grim spectre of another world war be conjured. But Britain must arm. Quiverings of flaccid obesity cannot command respect or ensure peace.'

Europe, the writer took the opportunity of discussing the prospects with this German observer; and in that conversation, which took place before the end of February 1936, the German not only prophesied to the Englishman, more than two months in advance, that the war would end in the total defeat of Abyssinia and in her extinction as an independent state; he also prophesied—and this some three months in advance—that, when this catastrophe duly occurred in the African theatre of war, the English forum of public opinion would see no repetition of the upheaval which, in the foregoing December, had resulted in the repudiation of the Laval-Hoare Peace Plan and in the resignation of Sir Samuel Hoare himself from the Secretaryship-of-State for Foreign Affairs.

In the German observer's opinion, the Laval-Hoare Plan, abortive though it had been, had served to break, for the British public, the shock of being brought face to face with the realities of the international situation, and on this account he expected that, when the fate which had been designed for Abyssinia in the Laval-Hoare Plan was eclipsed by a *fait accompli* which was vastly more cruel and more tragic, the British public, instead of reacting with a correspondingly greater energy than they had displayed in December, would receive the news with an astonishing apathy. As the German observer analysed the British people's psychology, their subconscious desire was not to take effective action at the necessary cost, but to strike an attitude and to discharge an emotion. His thesis was that the Laval-Hoare Plan had aptly served the British public's turn by enabling them to give their feelings a vent which was proportionate to the scope of these 'Anglo-Saxon attitudes'; and that, when once this emotional catharsis had been achieved in British souls, the Italo-Abyssinian tragedy was virtually over in so far as it concerned the British spectators in the audience. Now that the British gesture had been duly made and the British emotion duly discharged, this action would not, and could not, be repeated. This German prophecy was fulfilled with such remarkable accuracy in regard to the external facts that the writer, for his part, finds it difficult to reject the prophet's uncomplimentary essay in psycho-analysis.

One other motive which contributed—as it seemed to the writer—to the collapse of the sanctions front in the United Kingdom, after the completion of the military defeat of Abyssinia at the beginning of May 1936, was the Englishman's impulse, as 'a practical man', to act in the spirit of the English proverbs, 'least said soonest mended' and 'it is no use crying over spilt milk'. To a foreign critic it might seem rather an extreme application of the second of these two pro-



verbs to put it into practice in a case where the out-poured liquid was, after all, not really milk but blood—and that not even the Englishman's own. Nevertheless, this was, in fact, how the Englishman did react to the lethal shedding of Abyssinia's blood in May 1936. When the Italian crime of violence was consummated, the fifty-one nations which had followed, during the past seven months, a British lead in the application of economic sanctions against the criminal, beheld the spectacle of John Bull striding, with hasty yet uneasy steps, round the corner of the street in which the victim of the accomplished atrocity now lay slain. Would the discomfited empiricist blench at the still more ghastly sights that were almost certainly lying in wait for him in the next street as soon as the corner was turned? Or had his distress at the tragic culmination of the last act, and at his own sorry part in it, momentarily made his mind's eye insensitive to any other impressions? In that case this distracted English performer on the international stage of the year 1936 might be on the verge of running into dangers far graver than that peril of an imbroglio with Italy from which he had just extricated himself at the cost of leaving behind him, on the line of his precipitate retreat, the corpse of Abyssinia and the wreckage of the Covenant.

The answer which these speculations were to receive from the course of History falls to be recorded in future volumes of this *Survey*. In the present place, we may now attempt to follow the tide of British feeling and opinion as it flowed in the months of May and June 1936 towards an abandonment of the sanctions then in force against Italy.

As early as the 30th April, at a meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Conservative Members of the House of Commons, the abandonment of the existing sanctions was advocated by Mr. Winston Churchill; and both the speaker and his forum were significant, since Mr. Churchill had a keen political eye, while the body which he was addressing had proved the potency of their influence upon the counsels of the Cabinet by their intervention in the political crisis of December 1935 (on that occasion in opposition to the Laval-Hoare Plan). On the same day, at the annual assembly of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, a resolution urging the Government 'to uphold the policy of collective action against the declared aggressor, as an essential part of a system of collective security', was not carried without some expression of dissent. On the 1st May, at a meeting of the Manchester University Peace Council, an intensification of the existing sanctions was demanded by Miss Eleanor Rathbone; and on the 5th May a deputation from the League

of Nations Union, pleading for vigorous action in the cause of the League, was received by Mr. Baldwin and Mr. Eden. The two Ministers told their visitors, however, at this interview, that the Government would have to take stock of the position of the League in the light of the apparent failure of collective action in the Italo-Abyssinian dispute,<sup>1</sup> and already on the 2nd May Mr. Eden, addressing his constituents in the hitherto sheltered English town of Leamington, had referred to the tragedy which was being acted on that day in Ethiopia<sup>2</sup> in the following terms:

Many of you to-night, like myself, have your thoughts in Africa. I have only one observation to make about the events of the last seven months in connexion with that dispute. We had an obligation, a signed Covenant obligation, to play a part. We have sought to play that part to the full, and, so far as we have done this, we have nothing to reproach ourselves with, nothing to apologize for.

How far the Government of the United Kingdom would, in fact, be warranted in claiming to have played their part in full was, of course, a highly controversial question; and this question was hotly debated in the House of Commons at Westminster on the 6th May. The Labour Opposition's attack on the Government's handling of the whole Italo-Abyssinian affair was opened by Dr. Dalton; and although the Opposition spokesman pressed his criticisms home with a vehemence that evoked a certain sympathy for Mr. Eden, at the same time he presented a case which was not demolished by the Foreign Secretary's reply. Indeed, Mr. Eden frankly admitted on this occasion that 'without doubt, a blow' had 'been struck at the structure of the League and the conception of collective security'.

Even before this, on the 4th May, a correspondent in London<sup>3</sup> was cabling to *The New York Times* that His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom 'would be embarrassed greatly if Paris' (where a Government of the Left was now in prospect owing to a victory of the Front Populaire in a general election) 'should now suddenly be discovered to have enthusiasm for repressive measures against Italy . . . London fears an outbreak of tardy enthusiasm for sanctions in Paris'.<sup>4</sup> This was the unpromising frame of mind in Downing Street

<sup>1</sup> The Treasurer and Chairman of the Finance Committee of the League of Nations Union, Lord Queenborough, had resigned on the 28th April, on the ground that he found himself unable any longer to regard the League of Nations as an effective instrument of peace.

<sup>2</sup> At midnight on the 1st-2nd May the Emperor and his family had left Addis Ababa on their way to Djibouti. Looting and pillage had broken out in the city as soon as their departure became known. See p. 400, above.

<sup>3</sup> 'Augur'.

<sup>4</sup> *The New York Times*, 5th May, 1936.

with which the loyal supporters of the Covenant in Great Britain now had to contend; and against this shingle-beach the waves of public indignation this time broke in vain.

In a statement issued on the 5th May the National Council of Labour declared that

It is more than ever the duty of all loyal members of the League to maintain and intensify the measures adopted against Fascist Italy until the authority of the League is vindicated.

In a resolution adopted on the same date the Executive Committee of the National Liberal Federation implored the Government to reflect, before it was too late,

upon the awful consequences that have resulted, and may still result, from the policy of timorous inaction and half-heartedness which it has pursued.

On the same date, again, Sir Alfred Zimmern declared to an audience convened by the Manchester University League of Nations Society that 'we found ourselves to-day in a most humiliating—he might almost say a shameful—position'; and that 'it was not the League of Nations that had failed, it was ourselves'. On the 5th May, likewise, Professor Gilbert Murray, addressing a meeting at University College, London, urged that 'sanctions against Italy should continue to the end'; and on the same day, too, Lord Cecil expressed to the political correspondent of *The Manchester Guardian* the opinion<sup>1</sup> that the sanctions against Italy ought to be, not relaxed, but increased. On the 6th May, however, it was reported<sup>2</sup> that 'a period of stock-taking' was now definitely the *mot d'ordre* in Governmental circles; and on that date Sir Samuel Hoare, addressing the Unionist Canvassing Corps at the Caxton Hall, Westminster, on the subject of 'Imperial Defence', suggested that 'the time had come when the British Government might make it quite clear to the world what questions they regarded as vital, for which they were certainly prepared to fight'. In this category the former Foreign Secretary and future First Lord of the Admiralty named the integrity of the Low Countries and (more tentatively) British interests in the Far East.

As to other disputes, he would certainly not tie the hands of Great Britain for the future; they should judge a situation when it arose. It would be both futile and fatal if they made specific commitments upon issues that were not vital Imperial issues, and then, when the occasion arose for those commitments to be implemented, British public opinion was definitely opposed to them.

<sup>1</sup> See *The Manchester Guardian*, 6th May, 1936.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 7th May, 1936.

Manifestly this was the sketch of a British foreign policy which could only be reconciled with British obligations under the Covenant if the League were 'reformed' out of all recognition.

On the 8th May some ten thousand people attended a meeting, organized by the League of Nations Union, at which the continuance of collective action against Italy, and in particular the maintenance of sanctions, was advocated by a number of distinguished speakers, including Lord Cecil, Mr. Attlee, Sir Archibald Sinclair, Miss Rathbone and Lord Lytton.<sup>1</sup> On the same evening, on the other hand, Mr. Churchill returned to the charge in an address to his constituents at Chingford in which he did not spare the rod in castigating both the Government and their opponents. While, in trying to support the Government, he found it 'very difficult to keep in step with all their zigzags', he was at the same time 'not prepared to support sanctions against Italy merely for the purpose of injuring or weakening the Italian people'.

On the 9th May Lord Hugh Cecil—an ever chivalrous defender of desperate causes—addressed to the Editor of *The Times* a letter (published on the 11th) in which he laid down the two propositions that 'there cannot be on the part of this country, for some time to come, any attitude of friendliness towards Italy', and that 'Stresa has been washed away by Abyssinian blood'. In a letter published on the same day in *The Birmingham Post*, Sir Austen Chamberlain declared—or rather, reiterated—his belief that the independence of Abyssinia could not 'now be restored by anything short of a war, the end of which no man can foresee'. And, in a letter written that day and published in *The Times* on the 13th, Mr. Churchill banteringly took Lord Hugh Cecil to task for striking an attitude which, if followed out to its logical conclusions, would involve him perforce (so Mr. Churchill sought to demonstrate) in hostility towards no less than five Great Powers!

On the 27th May, at the opening of the Upper House of Convocation of Canterbury, a reference to the international situation of the moment was made, in the course of his speech, by the Primate of All England, Dr. Lang:

We have witnessed a great wrong committed by a European Power against an almost defenceless African people which the united judgment and efforts of the League of Nations have been proved powerless to prevent. We are suffering that most bitter of all humiliations, the humiliation of impotence. . . . Are those members of the League who are professedly loyal to its covenants ready to follow all the implications of

<sup>1</sup> Extracts from some of these speeches are printed in Rathbone, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-8.

their commitments? In the present dispute, military sanctions or even the possibility of them were ruled out, but it has been shown that, without them, economic sanctions are insufficient.

In a letter published on the same day in *The Manchester Guardian* a Liberal Member of Parliament, Mr. Geoffrey Mander, was still rebelling against that impotence to which the Archbishop now seemed inclined sorrowfully to resign himself.

I suggest that the Foreign Secretary should go to Geneva and at the Council meeting on the 15th June be prepared to give a courageous lead in favour of the immediate intensification of sanctions to any degree that may seem necessary and desirable to force Italy to accept a settlement in accordance with League principles. This should include all or any of the following: Withdrawal of ambassadors, refusal of League ports to Italian shipping, and no League shipping to enter Italian ports, severing communications between Italy and Africa.

Matters having drifted so far, these proposals undoubtedly involve the risk of military action. I believe that the British public are prepared to face this if it is made clear that the issue involved is nothing less than the maintenance of world peace—the highest of British interests—and that, if this minor risk is not now faced, the certainty of a world war in the comparatively near future will be immeasurably increased.

The League has not failed; it has not been tried. Let us now try it out to the full.

Mr. Mander's line was promptly challenged by a Pacifist ex-Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Lord Ponsonby, in a letter written on the 29th May and published in *The Manchester Guardian* on the 1st June:

I am surprised and somewhat shocked to find a prominent Liberal and close student of foreign affairs such as Mr. Mander advocating . . . 'an immediate intensification of sanctions' against Italy. . . . This is private-school-debating-society diplomacy. When Mr. Mander says that 'the British public are prepared to face' war with Italy, I cannot help wondering with what section of the British public he associates.

Nevertheless, the policy of 'maintaining or increasing pressure upon Italy until she is willing to agree to terms approved by the League of Nations' was again advocated in a statement published on the 3rd June by the National Executive of the Council of Action for Peace and Reconstruction under Mr. David Lloyd George's chairmanship.

Without a strong lead of this nature, British prestige and leadership of the League, which we voluntarily assumed last autumn, will continue to be an object of contempt and derision. The interests of the British Commonwealth, as General Smuts has pointed out, can only be safeguarded through the firm collective responsibility of the League of

Nations. The Covenant of the League in the present situation has been avoided rather than applied. This final opportunity means for Great Britain the choice between complete resignation of world leadership or its resumption once more in a determined attempt to rally the anxious and disturbed peoples of the Continent and of its own Empire behind the authority of the League, and through a strengthened League to procure world peace and disarmament.

On the other hand, on the 4th June, *The Times* published a letter from the authoritative pen of Sir John Fischer Williams in which this distinguished international lawyer took up a point—already made in Lord Rennell's letter of the 18th May<sup>1</sup>—to the effect that the sanctions of Article 16 were 'not punitive measures—that is, not measures intended, by making an example of the wrongdoer, to prevent other similar actions, or measures of revenge, or measures to reform the character of the transgressor'. Sir John Fischer Williams's conclusion was that

if sanctions fail to achieve their object, the failure does not in itself justify any censure on the Powers who took action, nor does it supply a reason for the continuance of the action.<sup>2</sup>

On the 4th June *The Times* published a leading article which opened with a reference to the last bout of correspondence in its columns on the international issue, and which contained a hint of the direction in which the Editor's own mind was moving in the pregnant sentence that "'sanctions" [*sic*, in inverted commas] cannot in the nature of things be permanent'. Yet the champions of the policy of persisting with the sanctions against Italy were not yet driven off the field.

In a letter written on the 2nd June, and published in *The Manchester Guardian* on the 5th, Mr. F. Seymour Cocks took Lord Ponsonby to task for

unwittingly supporting, not indeed 'private-school-debating-society diplomacy', but power politics of a peculiarly obnoxious kind. For in actual practice his policy would mean a reconciliation with the Italian dictatorship and the renewal of the Stresa Front.

On the 6th June at Bournemouth, at a conference of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives, a resolution calling upon the Government to continue, and if necessary extend, the sanctions against Italy was adopted by an overwhelming majority of the delegates.

<sup>1</sup> For the general tenor of that letter see p. 453, above.

<sup>2</sup> A further letter on the point from Sir John Fischer Williams was published in *The Times* on the 10th June.

In a letter published in *The Times* on the 8th June Professor R. B. Mowat pleaded for a friendly settlement with Germany as a necessary preliminary step towards an effective application of the Covenant against Italy.

Meanwhile, the President of the League of Nations Union, Lord Cecil of Chelwood, had been calling up all his reserves and flinging them into the battle. On the 27th May he had addressed the following letter to the secretaries of all branches of the Union, with a request that his message should be brought to the notice of members.

## URGENT AND IMPORTANT.

27th May, 1936.

My dear Secretary,—This is perhaps the most serious and urgent communication that I, as President of the Union, have ever addressed to its members

Italy has, so far, been successful in the fighting. But peace still has to be made. The obligation to preserve Abyssinian independence imposed by Article 10 on all members of the League remains. It is vitally necessary to the authority of the League and the honour of our country that we should do our utmost to secure the discharge of that obligation

The least we should insist upon is that the terms of peace should be approved by the League Council. Until Italy agrees to that, sanctions should be maintained and, if need be, increased. It is not part of our duty to prescribe in detail the measures needed. That is for the responsible Governments to say. But, since our honour and the future of our civilization is involved, we have a right to demand that our Government should openly declare its conviction that the Covenants of the League must be carried out, and its judgment as to the measures required to protect those Covenants. In that way only can faith in the League and collective security be revived and the present trend towards a major war in Europe be reversed.

At present the issue hangs in the balance. The League of Nations may be saved by the League of Nations Union if its members will once again make the effort necessary for that purpose.

Will you then, first of all, bring this letter immediately to the notice of as many as possible of the members of your branch?

Will you and they write or telegraph to your Member of Parliament, to the Prime Minister, and to the Foreign Secretary?

Will you call public meetings, pass resolutions, and send them to the same three persons?

Will as many of you as possible write letters to your local newspaper or newspapers?

Yours very truly,

CECIL.

In reply to a leading article in *The Times* of the 8th June, in which this circular letter was commented upon in terms of measured but

unmistakable disapproval, Lord Cecil addressed to the Editor a letter which was published on the 10th June:

The members of the Union feel, as I do, that the chance of any fruitful reform of the League may well be destroyed if it has to be undertaken under the shadow of a complete failure by the League to discharge its obligations to one of its members. . . . It is said by some people that the mischief is now done and our obligations are therefore at an end. I cannot think that this is so even under Article 16. It seems a preposterous interpretation of our duty to say that as soon as aggression is more or less successful the victim can look for no further assistance. . . . We are urged—not by *The Times*, but by others—to submit to international outrage because we are afraid to resist. This is in substance the policy of Ethelred the Unready. It is a policy which has never succeeded. We acted upon it in the Far East with disastrous results. If we act upon it now, the consequences will be far worse.

On the 11th June *The Times* published a letter written on the 8th by Professor Sir Alfred Zimmern, supporting Lord Cecil against *The Times*' editorial criticisms and bringing the whole international situation into a sharp focus.

The real alternatives for us are . . . in effect: (1) the abandonment of the League system, with all that this would imply over the whole field of international and inter-Commonwealth relations, and (2) to continue sanctions, in association with the new French Government, and at long last to educate the country (as the League of Nations Union is certainly open to criticism for not having done in sufficient measure) as to what the League system really means. Both alternatives involve the risk of a general war. My own view, confirmed by a recent visit to the Continent, is that the risk is distinctly less in the second case than in the first. But there is no use in denying its existence. We are living under the shadow of war—of a war which, if and when it breaks out, will not leave us on one side, however much we may crouch to avoid it.

The champions, in Great Britain, of the principle of collective security were now making their supreme effort; but this was already a forlorn hope; for, during the twenty-four hours that had elapsed between the publication, in *The Times*, of Lord Cecil's letter and that of Sir Alfred Zimmern's, Mr. Baldwin's policy had been enunciated for him by an indiscretion on the part of his Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Neville Chamberlain. The deed was done at a dinner given in Mr. Chamberlain's honour by the Nineteen-Hundred Club on the evening of the 10th June; and whether the indiscretion was corporate or individual, premeditated or improvised on the spur of the moment, it was unmistakably decisive.

On this festive occasion the way was prepared for Mr. Chamberlain in the following passage of a speech in which his health was proposed by Sir Robert Horne.



It may not [said Sir Robert] be for a person like me to express myself on the situation here, but forgive me if I foolishly blurt out an opinion in my own mind—namely, that I should be delighted to see the end of sanctions. When there is a corpse in your midst it is better to bury it. (Cheers.) Another thing I wish to say is that I would like to see the Fleet brought home from the eastern end of the Mediterranean. I have no doubt at all that it has played a great part in these waters. It may even have averted a European war. Now it only remains a manifestation of our failure in our main purpose.

In replying to the toast, Mr. Chamberlain took full advantage of the opening which Sir Robert Horne had thus offered him. After suggesting to his audience that the prospects of material prosperity at home were bounded only by the anxieties that were looming up over the foreign horizon, he declared in particular that 'the Italian affair in Abyssinia had resulted in a grievous estrangement between two countries with a long and unbroken record of friendship behind them'. Turning next to the policy of collective security, he submitted that

the circumstances in which the dispute between Italy and Abyssinia began appeared to offer an opportunity for the exercise of that policy which could hardly be more favourable for its success. The aggression was patent and flagrant, and there was hardly any country to which it appeared that a policy of sanctions could be exercised with a greater chance of success than upon Italy. There is no use for us to shut our eyes to realities. . . . That policy has been tried out and it has failed to prevent war, failed to stop war, failed to save the victim of aggression.

This judgment led up to the crucial passage of a political speech which was possibly destined to be remembered as an utterance of historic importance:

I want to put to you one or two conclusions which seem to me may fairly be drawn. There are some people who do not desire to draw any conclusions at all. I see, for instance, the other day that the president of the League of Nations Union issued a circular to its members in which he said that the issue hung in the balance and urged them to commence a campaign of pressure upon members of Parliament and members of the Government with the idea that if we were to pursue the policy of sanctions, and even to intensify it, it was still possible to preserve the independence of Abyssinia.

That seems to me the very midsummer of madness. If we were to pursue it, it would only lead to further misfortunes which would divert our minds as practical men from seeking other and better solutions. There is no reason why, because the policy of collective security in the circumstances in which it was tried has failed, we should therefore abandon the idea of the League and give up the ideals for which the

League stands. But if we have retained any vestige of common sense, surely we must admit that we have tried to impose upon the League a task which it was beyond its powers to fulfil.

That, then, is the first conclusion which, as it seems to me, is to be drawn from what has happened. Surely it is time that the nations who compose the League should review the situation and should decide so to limit the functions of the League in future that they may accord with its real powers. If that policy were to be pursued and were to be courageously carried out, I believe that it might go far to restore the prestige of the League and the moral influence which it ought to exert in the World. But, if the League be limited in that sort of way, it must be admitted that it could no longer be relied upon by itself to secure the peace of the World.

That leads me to the second conclusion which I wish to suggest to your minds. Is it not apparent that the policy of sanctions involves—I do not say war, but a risk of war? Is it not apparent that that risk must increase in proportion to the effectiveness of the sanctions and also by reason of the incompleteness of the League? Is it not also apparent from what has happened that, in the presence of such a risk, nations cannot be relied upon to proceed to the last extremity of war unless their vital interests are threatened?

That being so, does it not suggest that it might be wise to explore the possibilities of localizing the danger spots of the World and trying to find a more practical method of securing peace by means of regional arrangements which could be approved by the League, but which should be guaranteed only by those nations whose interests were vitally connected with those danger zones? I put these to you merely as provisional conclusions.

This speech of Mr. Neville Chamberlain's on the 10th June, 1936—breaking, as it did, a silence on the subject of future British foreign policy which had been maintained by the members of the Cabinet of the United Kingdom ever since the military collapse of Abyssinia six weeks back—was as unexpected as it was effective; and it may therefore be useful to try to trace its antecedents before attempting to record its consequences.

Until Sir Robert Horne's declaration at the dinner-table a few moments before Mr. Chamberlain rose to his feet, the Chancellor of the Exchequer's *exposé* of policy had not been led up to by any of the public statements that had been falling from the mouths of his colleagues.

On the 13th May, for example, in the House of Commons, in answer to the question

if it was still the policy of the Government not to apply any sanctions against Italy which would be likely to provoke a resistance based on the use of force; and whether this attitude had been communicated to other members of the League of Nations,

Mr. Baldwin had replied:

His Majesty's Government have repeatedly stated that they are prepared to consider, together with their fellow members of the League, any measures of an economic or financial nature on which there is general agreement at Geneva in connexion with the Italo-Ethiopian dispute. This position is unchanged.

Again, in the same place on the 20th May, in answer to a question

whether he would propose the maintenance of pressure till the aggressor was obliged to conclude a peace in accordance with the principles of the Covenant.

Mr. Eden had replied:

The attitude of His Majesty's Government is determined by the terms of the resolution passed by the Council of the League of Nations on the 12th May,<sup>1</sup> when it was decided that discussions should be resumed on the 15th June and that in the meantime there was no cause for modifying the measures previously adopted in collaboration by the members of the League.

And though, in a colloquy in the House of Commons with Mr. Henderson on the 25th May, Mr. Eden took the line that the interpretation which had been placed upon Article 16 of the Covenant in the collective note to Germany that had been initialed at Locarno on the 16th October, 1925, did not oblige the British Government to take military action in the Italo-Abyssinian conflict, in the absence of a specific recommendation from the League Council for military action in this case, there was no hint, either in this or in either of the two previous ministerial replies above quoted, of any intention on the British Government's part to abandon the non-military sanctions that were already in force.

On the other hand, there were already certain indications, before the end of May, of Anglo-Italian consultations behind the scenes which might have been started on Italian initiative but which would appear to have found at any rate a ready response on the British side.

In an interview granted on the 24th May to a representative of the Parisian newspaper *L'Intransigeant*, Signor Mussolini was reported to have said:

I demand nothing from England, and I am ready to give her all possible assurances.<sup>2</sup>

A message from Signor Mussolini to the same effect appears to have been conveyed to Mr. Eden by Signor Grandi in the course of a conversation in London on the 28th May; and in this context Signor

<sup>1</sup> See p. 484, below—A. J. T.

<sup>2</sup> *L'Intransigeant*, 25th May, 1936.

Grandi was reported to have expressed the hope that, at the forthcoming meeting of the League Council in June,<sup>1</sup> the lead in moving for the abandonment of sanctions would be taken by the United Kingdom. A report on this conversation was made by Mr. Eden to the Cabinet in Downing Street on the 29th May; and in Rome, on the same evening, there was an interview between Signor Suvich and Sir Eric Drummond, which was followed up by another on the 1st June. From Rome it was reported that Signor Mussolini's aim was, by a timely conciliatoriness on his part, to incline the scales in favour of the anti-sanctionist party in Great Britain in the now almost evenly balanced struggle between the opponents and the advocates of sanctions in that country. From London it was reported that, in the British Government's view, Signor Mussolini's latest assurances to Great Britain were sincere and trustworthy. By the 3rd June, a 'new deal' between the British and Italian Governments for a reconstruction of the Stresa Front in face of Germany was being prophesied in the press.<sup>2</sup> In London on the 3rd June, Mr. Eden received Signor Grandi once again; and the brief call which Mr. Eden paid on the Emperor Haile Selassie at the Ethiopian Legation in London on the 5th June was perhaps more than offset by the reinclusion of Sir Samuel Hoare in the Cabinet of the United Kingdom on the same day—not, it is true, in the office which he had yielded in December 1935 to Mr. Eden, but as First Lord of the Admiralty: a post which was not only eminent in itself but was also concerned—more intimately than any other Cabinet office except the Foreign Secretaryship itself—with the shaping of Anglo-Italian relations. These were the obscure roots from which a new departure in British foreign policy flowered on the 10th June upon the unsealed lips of Mr. Neville Chamberlain.

On the 11th June in the House of Commons, Mr. Baldwin parried a shower of questions regarding the relation between the Chancellor of the Exchequer's utterance and the Government's policy:<sup>3</sup>

Mr. Attlee (Limehouse, Lab.), asked the Prime Minister whether, in the speech delivered yesterday by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 486–7, below.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, *The News-Chronicle* of the 3rd June, 1936, and a telephone message, published in *Le Temps* of the 4th June, from its special correspondent in Rome.

<sup>3</sup> It was alleged by critics of the Government that Mr. Chamberlain's declarations in the matter of foreign policy on the 10th June had been agreed upon in advance by the Cabinet at a Cabinet meeting, held at an earlier hour on that very day, in which there had been a consensus of opinions (including Mr. Eden's voice) that the sanctions in force against Italy ought now to be abandoned (see *The Manchester Guardian*, 17th June, 1936).

reference to the League of Nations and to the question of sanctions represented the policy of His Majesty's Government.

Mr. Baldwin.—My right hon. friend informs me that the suggestions put forward by him last night were definitely stated by him to be provisional reflections on the experience gained by the Italo-Abyssinian dispute which had occurred to him personally.

Mr. Attlee.—Is it not a matter of grave embarrassment to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs if a very responsible Minister thinks aloud and allows these thoughts to be made public?

Mr. Baldwin.—I do not think so. This is the first question I have been asked about any speech made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who was addressing a very exclusive and politically educated audience. (Laughter) It seems to me, from the hasty perusal I have made of the rather truncated report, that he posited a number of questions which, I thought, were worth consideration. (Hear, hear)

Mr. Attlee.—Is it not much more than positing questions? He said very clearly what was his opinion. It is the tradition and the constitutional practice that, in matters of this kind, Ministers should not make statements in which they are voicing their private opinions. They should give the collective views of the Cabinet; and, in matters of foreign affairs, particularly, Ministers should not commit these indiscretions.

Sir A. Sinclair (Carthness and Sutherland, L.).—Will the Prime Minister give us an assurance that this incursion of the Chancellor of the Exchequer into the domain of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs was unauthorized, and that the policy of the Government remains one of fidelity to our obligations under the Covenant—a policy which the right hon. gentleman characterized last night as 'midsummer madness'? (Cheers and loud cries of 'Answer!')

Mr. Baldwin.—I make no complaint, myself, of what my right hon. friend has said. (Laughter)

Mr. Churchill (Epping, U.).—Having regard to the many countries which endeavour to incline their foreign policy in accordance with that of Great Britain, would the Prime Minister not consider the urgency of a Government statement, stating quite clearly where His Majesty's Government stand collectively, and will he give some information as to when that statement will be made?

Mr. Baldwin.—My right hon. friend and the whole House knows how important it is that such a policy should be framed as soon as possible. We are at present considering very difficult questions that have been raised by the situation on the Continent, and there will, of course, be an opportunity in due course for another debate on foreign affairs.

Mr. Attlee.—This is not a matter that can be taken lightly. Will the right hon. gentleman answer the specific question as to whether the definite opinion put out by the Chancellor of the Exchequer represents the present policy of His Majesty's Government? (Cries of 'Answer!')

Mr. Baldwin.—I do not think that I can go further than the answer I have given. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has explained to me quite frankly that they were provisional reflections on the experience gained which occurred to him personally.

Mr. Attlee.—Does that reply mean that these do not represent the

considered view of the Government? Answer 'Aye' or 'No' to that question' (Cheers.)

Mr. Baldwin.—No conclusions on this matter have yet been reached. (Laughter.)

On the same day, Mr. Chamberlain's speech was lauded in the Italian press for its 'almost brutal frankness'; and in Paris, in a leading article published on the 12th, *Le Temps* remarked:

Here is a language that is singularly novel in the mouth of one of the principal British Ministers—a language which bears witness to a profound evolution of the foreign policy of the United Kingdom, and which implies the formal condemnation of the maintenance of sanctions

On the 13th June in London, *The Times*, in a leading article entitled "'Sanctions" [*sic*] in Perspective', submitted that, while 'Mr. Chamberlain's address to a small political gathering was not a state paper and was not intended as such,' nevertheless

The passing flurry which his speech [had] provoked [had] served to show again how overmuch concentration upon the fate of the present 'sanctions' policy must impair a balanced view, abroad as well as at home, of British aims and interests at this moment. The right reinforcement, positive as well as negative, of the structure of peace, in the light of an international failure to apply the preventive machinery of the Covenant, will require much harder thinking. It involves, but overshadows, the question of how and when the Powers concerned may decide to bring to an end their attempt to counter aggression by measures of passive economic resistance.

This passage reads like some bulletin issued by a fashionable doctor to break to the public the news of the imminent demise of a patient whose death will be officially an occasion for mourning. There was, however, at least one country in which the mourning was genuine, and that was South Africa. In that weak and anxious African state, Mr. Chamberlain's speech had 'a bad press'; and on the 12th June in the House of Assembly at Capetown the Prime Minister of the Union, General Hertzog, in replying to parliamentary questions evoked by the words of the Chancellor of the Exchequer of the United Kingdom, declared that the Union Government had no intention, in the matter of sanctions, of reconsidering their declared policy of supporting their application against Italy.

In the House of Commons at Westminster on the 15th June, in answer to four parliamentary questions, Mr. Eden promised an early debate on foreign policy, in which he himself would 'be prepared to state the views of His Majesty's Government as to the action which is to be taken collectively at the meetings of the Council and the

Assembly of the League of Nations, which are to be held on the 26th and 30th June respectively'. The debate was duly held on the 18th June; and, after Mr. Eden had announced—in words already quoted above<sup>1</sup>—the Cabinet's decision<sup>2</sup> to recommend at Geneva that the sanctions in force against Italy should be abandoned, the Government were conspicuously worsted in a war of words in which the most potently winged shafts issued, in a marvellously sustained succession of telling shots, from the eloquent mouth of Mr. Lloyd George.<sup>3</sup> Yet mere words, however eloquent, were of no more effect against voting-power at Westminster than they had been against bomb-power and poison-spray-power on the African scene of action. When the debate was resumed on the 23rd June, it was apparent that the force of the indignation and dismay that had been evoked by the announcement of the Government's decision was already half-spent; and, in the division on the Labour Opposition's vote of censure, to which the debate was carried, the outvoting of 170 'ayes' by 384 'noes' was a foregone conclusion.

The tardy official announcement of the United Kingdom Government's intention to recommend at Geneva that the sanctions hitherto in force against Italy should be abandoned produced an immediate crop of momentous reactions in other countries.

One of the most prompt of these reactions was that which followed in France; and this was certainly the most important of them, since France was a state member of the League whose influence on its counsels was as potent as that of Great Britain herself. The unwillingness of the French Government to offend Signor Mussolini, or even

<sup>1</sup> See p. 445.

<sup>2</sup> Officially, this decision appears to have been taken as recently as the 17th, which was the eve of the debate. It was credibly reported, however (see footnote 3 on p. 466, above), that the decision had really been taken seven days earlier, on the 10th, a few hours before the delivery of Mr. Chamberlain's speech.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Lloyd George must have felt some chagrin upon learning, too late, that he had overlooked one of the most keenly barbed arrows that Chance had placed in his quiver—a weapon with which the Welsh parliamentary archer might have made marvellous play. It was left for a South African newspaper, *The Cape Argus*, on the 19th June, to draw attention to the strange coincidence that the debate in the House of Commons at Westminster on the 18th June, 1936, had taken place on the 120th anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo; and in England the first adversary of the Government to make use of this discovery was Mr. Attlee in moving his vote of censure in the House of Commons on the 23rd June. Picking up the point in the course of the same debate, Mr. Cocks compared the conduct of the British Government of the day to that of Jos Sedley on the original Waterloo Day in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*. Mr. Cocks also pointed out a second coincidence: the immediately preceding anniversary of Waterloo had been celebrated by the signature of the Anglo-German naval agreement (see the *Survey for 1935*, vol. i, pp. 178 seqq.).

to embarrass him in the pursuit of his African adventure, had been the most conspicuous cause of the failure of the League to prevent the military conquest of Abyssinia by Italian arms. During the six weeks, however, which had elapsed between the break-down of Abyssinian military resistance at the turn of April and May and Mr. Neville Chamberlain's declaration of policy in London on the 10th June, the political situation in France had changed in two important respects. In the first place, a Government of the Left, under the presidency of a Socialist Prime Minister, Monsieur Léon Blum, had assumed office as the result of a victory of the Front Populaire in a general election which had been fought by all the component parties on an anti-Fascist platform. In the second place, French opinion of almost all shades had been upset and alienated by Signor Mussolini's annexation decree of the 9th May.<sup>1</sup>

As soon as this news became known in Paris, it was promptly announced (and this at a moment when Monsieur Flandin's Ministry was still in office) that 'the French Government had warned the Italian Government that they made every reservation about such a proceeding'; and it became apparent that this Italian legislative gesture had given a greater shock to French public opinion than the occupation of Addis Ababa or the use of poison gas or the opening of hostilities by the invasion of Abyssinia on the 3rd October, 1935. To an English observer, who had been constrained to look on for month after month, with ever rising indignation, while French diplomacy—as it appeared to English eyes—never wearied in its efforts to ensure the triumph of the Italian aggressor, it was surprising, and almost ludicrous, to see the French smitten at last with a touch of the Englishman's own feelings as the result of an Italian gesture which was little more than an advertisement of a *fait accompli* for the accomplishment of which the French Government and the French press appeared to have been working with all their might until the last. If, instead of declaring the annexation of Abyssinia, Signor Mussolini had been content to assume a protectorate, or had been so sly as to request the League of Nations, in deferential language, to confer a mandate on the Italian apostles of Civilization, would French opinion have acquiesced without a twinge and perhaps even have pronounced, with a sigh of relief, that the generous and indomitable French endeavours to achieve a settlement by conciliation had at last been crowned with success? The answer to this question can only be a matter of conjecture, since Signor Mussolini did not care to gain his ends by face-saving compromises; but it seems probable that

<sup>1</sup> See p. 359, above.



the French would have resigned themselves at this point to the annexation of Abyssinia by Italy *de facto*, if only the head of the Italian state had not insisted upon calling the act by its true name.

The tactless frankness with which Signor Mussolini preferred to act produced a considerable revulsion of French opinion in a sense unfavourable to Italy; and in these circumstances a hope sprang up, in sanctionist circles in Great Britain, that a change in French foreign policy—a change which might be as important as it would be belated—might emerge from a consultation which had taken place in Paris on the 9th May between Monsieur Blum, who was at that time already the prospective Prime Minister of France, and Mr. Attlee, the leader of the Labour Opposition in the Parliament of the United Kingdom. In spite of these expectations, it may no doubt be questioned whether the leader of the French Socialist Party, once in office, would have been willing in any case to go to appreciably greater lengths in coercing Italy than MM. Paul-Boncour and Flandin and Laval—even if Mr. Baldwin's Government in Great Britain had now come out in favour of maintaining the sanctions against Italy and intensifying them. It is, however, certain that the British Government's actual decision not to maintain or intensify the sanctions, but to abandon them, was the determining factor in moving Monsieur Blum and his colleagues to take the same line—which was in fact what the French Government did. As early as the 19th June (that is, on the morrow of Mr. Eden's announcement in the House of Commons at Westminster) the new Government which had taken office on the 4th June in France under the presidency of Monsieur Léon Blum decided, at a Cabinet meeting, to acquiesce in whatever decision in regard to sanctions might be taken by the League of Nations—with a note to the effect that, in the French Government's own view, the abandonment of sanctions was the action that was now indicated by practical considerations.<sup>1</sup>

In thus following the United Kingdom's lead, France had been anticipated by Australia and by Canada; for on the 18th June itself—the very day on which Mr. Eden made his announcement of policy in the House of Commons at Westminster—the Prime Minister of the Australian Commonwealth, Mr. Lyons, announced at Canberra that instructions to advocate the abandonment of sanctions had already been given to the Australian delegate to the Assembly; and on the same day at Ottawa a pronouncement in favour of the abandonment of sanctions was made by the Prime Minister of the Dominion

<sup>1</sup> See the official *communiqué* in *Le Temps*, 20th June, 1936.

Government, Mr. Mackenzie King.<sup>1</sup> In Brussels on the 22nd June the Belgian Cabinet decided likewise to associate itself with the British Government's decision. From Port-au-Prince on the 23rd the Haitian Government telegraphed to the Secretariat at Geneva their decision to abandon sanctions, without waiting for any recommendations from the League Council or Assembly or from the Co-ordination Committee. A similar decision had been notified by the Ecuadorian Government as early as the 4th April, 1936—a month before the collapse of Abyssinian resistance. By the 26th June the Secretariat had received communications in support of the abandonment of sanctions from Chile,<sup>2</sup> Honduras, Uruguay and Poland. And on the 27th the Cabinet at Warsaw not only ratified Colonel Beck's action in sending his note to Geneva on the previous day, but gave orders for the necessary steps for the abandonment of sanctions on Poland's part to be taken forthwith.

There was one group of states members of the League whose attitude was of an interest and an importance that could not be measured by their population or wealth or military strength; and this group consisted of those European states of lesser calibre which had been neutral not only during the General War of 1914–18 but also in most of the European wars of the preceding hundred years. In joining the League of Nations as original members, these ex-neutrals had taken the risk of abandoning a status which—with certain flagrant exceptions<sup>3</sup>—had served them well for a century. They had consented to take part in the experiment of attempting to establish a régime of collective security, because they believed that it offered a more constructive solution for the international problem than their own previous endeavours to snatch a precarious immunity for themselves by eluding the play of international forces. The blow which had now been dealt to the League of Nations by the failure to frustrate Italy's act of aggression against Abyssinia—following, as it did, upon the League's previous failure to protect China from a similar attack on the part of Japan—struck these European ex-neutrals with dismay; and at Geneva on the 9th and 10th May, on the eve of the meeting of the League Council which was to take place on the 11th,<sup>4</sup> the representatives of Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Holland con-

<sup>1</sup> In announcing his Government's decision on this date, Mr. King stated that the decision had been reached at Ottawa 'before any information was available as to what the British attitude would be.'

<sup>2</sup> For the attitudes of Chile and Ecuador at the meeting of the League Council in May, see pp. 485–6, below.

<sup>3</sup> e.g., the fate of Denmark in 1864 and the fate of Belgium in 1914.

<sup>4</sup> For this meeting of the Council, see pp. 483–6, below.

ferred with one another, and with the representatives of Switzerland and Spain, under the chairmanship of Dr. Munch (Denmark).

In a broadcast speech delivered in Danish from Geneva at midnight on the 10th May, Dr. Munch declared that it was not for the smaller states to propose that sanctions should be rescinded. They were strongly of the opinion that these should be continued; and, if they were to be abandoned, it would have to be on the initiative of the Powers which had suggested them. If, at the forthcoming meeting of the League Council, the Italian representatives contended that, because of Italian domination over Abyssinia, the Abyssinian representatives could not have a seat at the Council table, not one of the smaller states in his bloc would agree to 'such an open mockery of the League'. It was clear, Dr. Munch added, that the League as at present constituted had not the power to afford security to the lesser states. It was clear that the League was not strong enough to protect the weaker states against the great military Powers. The attempts at negotiation in the Italo-Abyssinian war had failed. Sanctions had also failed. From the experiences of the last few years the smaller states had to conclude that the League could afford them no security which was of value, and that that which was held out could not be regarded with confidence. It was clear, Dr. Munch declared, that security could not be reached for the smaller states while the armaments race continued among the Great Powers and international tension increased day by day.

Dr. Munch made another public statement on the 16th May—this time at Copenhagen, upon his return home after the Council meeting of the 11th–13th May had taken place. On this occasion the Danish Minister for Foreign Affairs contended that, in maintaining the existing sanctions against Italy for the time being, the Council had ruled, by implication, that the juridical position had not been changed by the military *fait accompli* in Abyssinia; and he announced that the seven neutral Powers<sup>1</sup> were strongly determined to continue their active co-operation inside the League so long as even the slightest possibility seemed to remain for serving the ideals in the name of which the League had been founded. At the same time Dr. Munch announced that the representatives of the seven neutral Powers had agreed to meet together two days in advance of the next session of the League Council; and this seven-Power meeting was duly held at Geneva on the 25th June. This time, however, the representatives of the seven states arrived regretfully—in the light of the decisions already taken and announced in London and in Paris—at the con-

<sup>1</sup> Finland had associated herself with the original six.

clusion that the sanctions in force against Italy would have to be abandoned.

While the European neutrals thus acquiesced in the abandonment of the sanctions as a regrettable necessity, there were two states members of the League which still held, and proclaimed their conviction, that the sanctions ought to be maintained. These two stalwart states members were South Africa and New Zealand; and thus, for the first time, those states members of the League which were also states members of the British Commonwealth of Nations found themselves divided on a capital question of international policy. While the United Kingdom now took the lead among the sanction-taking states in recommending that the sanctions should be abandoned, South Africa stood out to the last for their maintenance; and while Australia and Canada anticipated France herself in following the United Kingdom's lead, New Zealand broke with a habit, which seemed almost to have become a constitutional convention, of taking her cue from Downing Street in matters of foreign policy.

It remains to record that on the 20th June the President of the United States<sup>1</sup> issued two proclamations: one raising the embargo upon the export of arms and munitions of war from the United States to Abyssinia, and the other cancelling his warning to American citizens not to travel on ships belonging to either belligerent. In an accompanying statement the President declared that the reason why he was now cancelling his previous proclamations was that he had 'now ascertained that, in fact, the conditions which' had led to the issue of those original proclamations had 'ceased to exist'.

This was the situation on the eve of the Assembly's session of the 30th June-4th July, 1936. Before recording the proceedings at this session of the Assembly and at the two foregoing sessions of the Council—one on the 11th-13th May, and the other on the 26th June—it will be convenient to complete the record of the spiritual struggle in Great Britain in which Mr. Neville Chamberlain and those who thought and felt as he did were now in the ascendant.

From the evening of the 10th June, 1936, onwards, the anti-sanctionist flow of the tide of feeling in Great Britain ran strong and fast. On the 11th June it was announced that the Duchess of Atholl had resigned from her membership of the Edinburgh branch of the League of Nations Union on the ground of disagreement with the

<sup>1</sup> For the previous action of the United States in regard to the war in East Africa see pp. 239 *seqq.*, above.

policy advocated in Lord Cecil's circular letter of the 27th May.<sup>1</sup> In her own letter to the Branch Secretary, she wrote:

In view of the grave dangers threatening the peace of Europe, I am of opinion that sanctions should now be called off, and that efforts should be concentrated on building up an effective system of mutual assistance against aggression in Europe.<sup>2</sup>

On the 15th June, at a meeting in the Caxton Hall, Westminster, which had been organized by the British-Italian Council for Peace and Friendship, a resolution urging the Government to take the initiative in securing the repeal of the sanctions in force against Italy was carried; and it was also agreed to send, on behalf of those present, a message of goodwill to Signor Mussolini. Nor was the tide stemmed by a letter, published in *The Times* of the 16th June, from Sir Arthur Salter, in which the writer denounced the policy of depriving the League of its coercive powers under the guise of 'reforming' it, and went on to argue that, if the alternative of genuinely restoring the League system were taken in hand, the necessary strength could not be secured 'by buying the adhesion of Italy'. Equally in vain were two resolutions in favour of maintaining and intensifying sanctions that were passed on the 17th June—one at a council meeting of the Women's National Liberal Federation, and the other at a meeting of Members of Parliament and other persons which was held that evening in a committee room of the House of Commons. These expressions of private opinion did not avail to avert Mr. Eden's announcement of public policy in the House of Commons on the 18th;<sup>3</sup> nor could that decision be reversed by the speeches that were made, or by the resolutions that were passed, at the annual meeting of the General Council of the League of Nations Union which was held on the 19th–23rd June at Scarborough, or by the speeches delivered by Mr. Noel Baker at Derby, Mr. Arthur Greenwood at Wakefield, Mr. Herbert Morrison at Woolwich, and Dr. Hugh Dalton at Stanhope during the same week-end. On the 20th June, at Chigwell, Mr. Churchill once more combined a vigorous advocacy of the abandonment of sanctions in the present circumstances with a scathing indictment of the Government's policy during the preceding nine months; but Mr. Baldwin could look with equanimity upon the

<sup>1</sup> See p. 461, above.

<sup>2</sup> A reply to the arguments put forward by the Duchess of Atholl in this letter was made by Lord Cecil in a letter published in *The Manchester Guardian* on the 18th June. For the Duchess of Atholl's counter-reply, advocating the re-establishment of the Stresa Front, see *The Manchester Guardian*, 23rd June, 1936.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 445, above.

subordinate clause of Mr. Churchill's speech, in consideration of what the speaker was saying in the governing sentence. On the 21st June the retreating British sanctionists were given a parting kick by Signor Mussolini in person. Speaking in Rome that day at a celebration of the hundredth anniversary of the foundation of the Bersaglieri Corps, the Italian dictator declared to the assembled Italian riflemen:

I know what you can perform—and what all the armed forces of the state, and all Italians, can perform shoulder to shoulder with you—if certain 'midsummer madmen' are not reduced to reason, or at any rate to impotence.

A weighty criticism of the British Government's policy was made by Lord Hugh Cecil in a letter written on the 20th June and published in *The Times* on the 22nd.

The continuance of 'sanctions' would have reduced Italy to financial collapse and great economic distress. All Europe would have seen that lawless nationalism does not pay. This would have been a great matter, much greater indeed than saving Abyssinia. The Government seem to have been diverted from this policy by what in plain words must be called fear. Fear that Italy would make war upon us, fear that general war might ensue, fear that Germany might attack the Western Powers supported by an offended Italy. Mr. Baldwin seems also to have had a private fear that the British people would not support the Government in face of war. I am sure that no foreign policy can be successfully conducted if the Government have lost their nerve. They seem not to appreciate the immense distinction, both in respect of morality and in respect of the reaction of public sentiment in Great Britain, between making war on another nation and not being deterred from following a wise and righteous policy by the fear that another nation might make war on us. . . . We cannot escape war by running away from the risk of it. Such submission is in effect submission to blackmail; and that there is no escape from blackmail by submission is notorious.

On the 23rd June, however, *The Times* published a letter in the opposite sense, which was also of weight, from Mr. J. A. Spender, in which this English Liberal publicist, writing from Paris, set out the French point of view as he saw it:

I am writing for the moment from France, and am tempted to say that many of the speeches and comments of English speakers and writers seem extremely remote from the facts, when read on this side of the Channel. Especially so is the idea that France has been waiting for a lead from us for a fresh move against Italy, and is disappointed at not receiving it. . . . It is the opinion of most Frenchmen that we led the way into the present *impasse* and that we have acted rightly in showing the way out. . . . To us the Italian-Abyssinian affair has appeared as a simple question of doing justice between two members of the League; to the French it has from the beginning seemed to be

fraught with complications and consequences which would have fallen on them first of all.

On the 24th June *The Times* published a letter of the 21st from Colonel Cuthbert Headlam which threw light on the change of opinion since December in the ranks of the Government's supporters in Parliament.

Last December you were good enough to publish a letter from me protesting against any acceptance by the British Government of the Hoare-Laval proposals for a settlement of the war between Italy and Ethiopia. The reasons for my protest were that these proposals were not calculated to effect the purpose for which they were intended in the conditions then existing, and, far more important, that they were in direct contravention of the policy outlined by the Government before the General Election. The situation to-day is entirely changed, and the Government's declared intention to advise the League of Nations to raise the economic sanctions against Italy appears to me to be the unfortunate but inevitable result of the Ethiopian *débâcle*, because it is obvious that, unless the League is determined to deprive the Italians of the fruits of their victory, if necessary by force of arms, the continuance of economic sanctions cannot help the Ethiopians.

Lord Hugh Cecil's letter of the 20th June was answered by Lord Ponsonby in a letter written on the 23rd and published in *The Times* on the 25th.

The outstanding cause of failure [Lord Ponsonby submitted] was the reluctant, half-hearted, and even unwilling attitude of many of the Governments who had condemned Italy as an aggressor and acquiesced in the impositions of sanctions. To speak frankly, many of them did not mean business. They might have cheered the British Government and the British Fleet had they gone forward, but their own contributions would have been negligible.

The fundamental question of what was the proper purpose of collective security was raised by the Archbishop of York on the 25th June in the course of a presidential address to the York Diocesan Conference.

It seems to me [he said] that some of the spokesmen of the Government have given wrong grounds for their decision, even if the decision reached is a right one, because they have been urging as a reason for abandoning sanctions that they have failed to stop the war in Abyssinia, which was the purpose for which they were imposed.

That ought not to have been the purpose for which they were imposed. The primary purpose is not to save Abyssinia or any one else, but to uphold international authority. Starting on that ground, it might still be right to abandon sanctions, but it would make a difference in the long run on which ground we are making our decision, because it will affect the decision we may have to make on some similar occasion in some future years.

In a letter of the 25th June which was published in *The Manchester Guardian* on the 27th, Sir Ernest Benn adjured his countrymen to 'let bygones be bygones' in the sense of charitably forgiving and forgetting the offence which Italy had just committed against—not England but Abyssinia!

Such an attitude may . . . have rather more of the Christian spirit about it than the spiteful harping upon a Genevan technicality which, long before another eighteen years have passed, may be recognized as nothing but a trouble-making folly

In a militant speech delivered at Manchester on the 27th June, Mr. Neville Chamberlain hit out at the Labour Opposition with his left hand and at Mr. Lloyd George<sup>1</sup> with his right. With regard to the policy of the Labour Party, Mr. Chamberlain said:

Now—wisely, as I think—they have stopped talking of military sanctions, and all they are asking is that present sanctions should be maintained. The best hope they have is that Italy should abstain from annexing a corner of Abyssinia which has no Government and in which, if our information is correct, a large number of the inhabitants are hostile to the former Government. Do the Socialists really think it would be possible to get fifty countries to keep on sanctions for such a meagre and wretched purpose as that . . . ? The war has stopped. It is at an end. And the only result of trying to keep the sanctions on to-day would be that one country after another would slip out, and in the end the whole policy would crumble away amid universal derision. That seems to me neither a wise, nor a courageous, nor a dignified policy to pursue.

As for Mr. Lloyd George, he was taken to task by Mr. Chamberlain for being 'a more bellicose critic than the Socialists'.<sup>2</sup>

On the 28th June the Government's decision to recommend the abandonment of sanctions was denounced from six platforms at a public demonstration in Hyde Park which had been organized by the National Council of Labour. On this occasion the Government were arraigned in the following terms by one of the speakers, Mr. Attlee:

The Government has decided to lead in the surrender to force. This has killed the collective system. While they refuse to say clearly what their future policy is to be, it is clear from Mr. Chamberlain's speech that

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Lloyd George's speech of the 24th June at Sawley, to which Mr. Chamberlain was replying on the 27th, is quoted below. Mr. Lloyd George made a counter-reply, on the 28th June, in an address delivered at the Castle Street Baptist Church, London.

<sup>2</sup> The passage of this speech of the 27th June in which Mr. Neville Chamberlain addressed himself to Mr. Lloyd George has been quoted already on p. 446, above.



they aim at reforming the League so as to make it safe for aggressors. The League is to become a mere debating society, within which there will be a system of scarcely veiled alliances. This means a return to power politics, to the balance of power, to the old fatal road that led to 1914.

The tide of British feeling was still, however, running out; and, on the eve of the meeting of the League Assembly on the 30th June, the low-water mark in England was perhaps registered in the publication of a correspondence between Sir Austen Chamberlain and Professor Gilbert Murray in which Sir Austen Chamberlain announced his resignation of his seat on the Executive Committee of the League of Nations Union. The sands now lay bare; and if Mr. Neville Chamberlain were willing to be cast for the part of a Conservative Pharaoh speeding in triumphant pursuit of the retreating hosts of an Opposition Israel, he might be sorely tempted to take his brother's gesture as a signal for attempting to make the perilous passage from a new-fangled British foreign policy based on a collective system of international security within the framework of the League of Nations to an old-fashioned policy based on the Balance of Power. If the militant Chancellor of the Exchequer did set foot on those treacherously inviting sands, it remained to be seen whether he would be any more successful than his Egyptian prototype had been in passing over in safety, dry-shod.

It was already manifest, however, that, in that chapter of the history of British foreign policy which had now just reached its conclusion, the United Kingdom, under the guidance and on the responsibility of Mr. Neville Chamberlain and his colleagues in Mr. Baldwin's Cabinet, had been taking action—or been acquiescing in action taken by other Powers—with results that were certainly momentous and possibly irrevocable.

The United Kingdom Government's record since the beginning of the Italo-Abyssinian affair was summed up, in a speech delivered on the 24th June at Sawley, by Mr. Lloyd George.

A few months ago Britain undertook to champion the cause of right. (A voice: 'And we let them down'.) Yes, I am afraid we have let them down badly. We led the nations, fifty nations followed us. They said, 'Britain is leading'—Britain, the indomitable Britain that never looks back when it sets its hand to a course. . . . Last night I saw the white feather embroidered across the Union Jack by a skilled and practised hand, and I do not mind saying that I am one of the millions of this land who are humiliated by the spectacle. . . . We ought never to have taken this task in hand unless we meant to put it through. There never has been such a chance in the history of the World of arraying the whole of the nations behind the cause of international right as to-day. Never.

It was a heaven-sent opportunity—fifty nations, great and small. There was an overwhelming force behind justice, a force that no aggressor could stand against if resolutely led. We had in Europe two nations that have got the most powerful armies—Russia and France. We had the whole of the Mediterranean Powers behind us excepting the aggressor. Their harbours, their fleets, their air squadrons—all were facilities at our disposal. We had a foe, an aggressor, an enemy, whose lines of communication were the most vulnerable that any army has advanced along—just two narrow little outlets, one at each end of the Mediterranean, and the whole of the Mediterranean Powers behind us.

Right was there to be established on its throne in such a way that it would not have been overturned in our day, in the days of our children, or the days of our children's children. It was the first real opportunity that had presented itself under conditions where the power behind righteousness was irresistible. We have thrown it away. We are going to reconstitute the League. That is no use. Unless people use power and opportunity which they possess, it is no use seeking fresh powers, fresh opportunity. They will act just the same when the time comes. . . : Is it really coming to this: that Britain will not do its duty for fear of a black eye? Crusades have been started in this country, and crusades have been abandoned before to-day, but this is the first crusade where I have heard of the crusaders turning their backs upon their sacred enterprise merely because they were afraid that the enemy might bite. Surely this is a new version of Richard Cœur de Lion.

This mordantly etched picture of the British Government's action—or inaction—during those crucial months of the years 1935 and 1936 was, of course, presented in the controversial form of an indictment delivered, in the heat of a political struggle, by a politician who was conscious, at the moment, of being on the losing side. Nevertheless, it might be prophesied with some confidence, even at this early date, that the judgment of History upon the conduct of British foreign policy at this juncture would be hardly less severe—even though it might be more moderately measured and more evenly balanced—than the contemporary judgment of Mr. Lloyd George. To the historian it seemed probable that, if this British hand had been played in Mr. Chamberlain's and Mr. Baldwin's fashion by their predecessors in office four hundred years earlier, at the dawn of the 'modern' age of Western history, such play would have been condemned with equal vehemence—though on diametrically opposite grounds—by Messer Niccolò Machiavelli and by the Chevalier Bayard. The Florentine publicist would have held up his hands in professional horror at what would have appeared to him to be the inexplicable ineptitude of His Britannic Majesty's Government in deliberately releasing the Romagnol dictator of Italy from the strategic trap into which he had wantonly walked when he had

placed a huge Italian army—as a pawn commanded by British naval pieces—on the further side of the Suez Canal, with the British Fleet concentrated in the Levant, while the Italian army in East Africa was at Great Britain's mercy even for obtaining its supplies of drinking water. From a mind well stocked with illustrations drawn from Greek and Roman history, Machiavelli would have classified this British act of political folly in the same category as Commodus's despicable and disastrous abandonment of the fruits of his father's laboriously won victory over the Marcomanni.<sup>1</sup> As for the Chevalier Bayard, who dealt in the coin of Honour and not in that of *Realpolitik*, he would doubtless have anticipated Mr. Lloyd George in lamenting the apparent extinction, in British hearts, of the spirit of Richard Coeur de Lion.

A contemporary English observer of British opinion and policy in May and June 1936 was bound to ask himself the deeply disturbing question whether perchance he was assisting at the spectacle of the abdication of Great Britain from her eminent and responsible international position as arbiter of Europe—a position which she had occupied for some two and a half centuries, ever since 'the Glorious Revolution' of A.D. 1688. In A.D. 1936, was it possible that not only Great Britain, but also her former rival and latter-day associate France, were seeking admission into the respectable but uninfluential company of the European neutrals? Several of the already admitted members of that company—for example, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands and Sweden—had been Great Powers in their day; and while Spain's and Portugal's loss of status in the seventeenth century may have been involuntary, the retirement of the Netherlands in the eighteenth century, and of Sweden in the nineteenth century, from active service in the international arena had been more or less deliberate. The Dutch and the Swedes had renounced the gladiator's publicity and perquisites because they could no longer endure the hard labour—or stomach the dirty work—without which it was impossible to win these dubious prizes. Were the French and English peoples now arriving at this Dutch and Swedish state of sensibility?

If this was really the moral and political change in Europe which was being brought to light by the test of the African crisis of 1935-6, then Mankind had to expect, in the near future, a vast alteration in the balance of international forces; for if Great Britain and France

<sup>1</sup> A later modern Western student of international politics might also have brought into the comparison the reprieve that was gratuitously granted to Frederick the Great of Prussia by Czar Peter III when the latter ascended the Imperial throne at St. Petersburg at a stage of the Seven Years War when Frederick's prospects seemed almost desperate to Frederick himself.

did indeed intend to evacuate their historic positions, there would certainly be other claimants to the vacant places. When King Pyrrhus of Epirus was in the act of sailing away, never to return, from the shores of a Sicily which had just seen him inexplicably throw in his hand at a moment when he seemed to be within an ace of victory, the fickle Greek knight-errant 'is said to have gazed back at the island and said to his suite: "My friends, what a marvellous arena we are leaving for the Carthaginians and the Romans to fight in"', and Plutarch does not fail to remark that 'Pyrrhus's surmise was soon translated into fact'.<sup>1</sup> In A.D. 1936, was Mr. Baldwin leaving Europe to the Germans and the Russians as an arena in which these two young and lusty nations were soon to exercise their giant limbs in contending for the lordship of a Modern Western World which appeared to be showing itself just as incapable as the Ancient World had been of achieving an inevitable unity through any nobler or saner instrumentality than that of military brute force?

#### (xiv) The Proceedings at Geneva (11th May-6th July, 1936).

Throughout the course of the Italo-Abyssinian conflict, the action was taking place simultaneously on three different fronts: a military front in Africa, a diplomatic front at Geneva and a domestic front in the United Kingdom. The action on the African front had virtually come to an end<sup>2</sup> with the occupation of Addis Ababa by Marshal Badoglio's forces on the 5th May, 1936;<sup>3</sup> and during the months of May and June the most important action that was taking place was a battle of wills and ideas between sanctionists and anti-sanctionists in Great Britain of which some record has been given in the preceding chapter. The outcome of the diplomatic struggle at Geneva hung upon the issue of this British domestic conflict; and, as soon as it was clear that, in the forum of British public opinion, the anti-sanctionists were winning the day, there was no longer any doubt about what was going to happen at Geneva.

The first occasion on which the Italo-Abyssinian affair came on to the agenda of the League of Nations after the collapse of the Abyssinian military forces at the turn of April and May 1936 was at a session of the Council which opened on the 11th May and lasted till the 13th; and since at this time the issue of the domestic struggle in Great Britain was not yet sufficiently clear to have emboldened Mr. Baldwin and his colleagues to determine and proclaim their

<sup>1</sup> Plutarch: *Pyrrhus*, Chap. 23.

<sup>2</sup> For the remnant of Ethiopian independence in the south-west, see pp. 517-8, below.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 400, above.

policy, the May meeting of the League Council at Geneva likewise ended on a note of uncertainty.

On the 11th May, 1936, the Council found awaiting it two communications from the Abyssinian side, indicting the League for having permitted—in breach of the covenanted undertakings of the states members—the consummation of a crime which Abyssinia had so many times vainly implored the League to prevent. The first of the two documents was a telegram of the 10th May from the Emperor Haile Selassie at Jerusalem, in which the expatriated head of the Ethiopian state informed the League that it was the Italian use of poison gas which had forced upon him the decision to abandon his military resistance to the invaders of his country.

We now demand [the Emperor continued] that the League of Nations should continue its efforts in order to ensure respect for the Covenant, and that it should decide not to recognize territorial extensions, or the exercise of an assumed sovereignty, resulting from an illegal recourse to armed force and from numerous other violations of international engagements

The second communication—which was a letter of the 11th May from the Abyssinian representative at Geneva<sup>1</sup>—was more militantly reproachful in its language:

The crime has been consummated. The Covenant has been torn up. Article 10 has been outrageously violated. Article 16 has not been applied. . . .

The deserted Ethiopian people was smitten with a boundless despair when, at the beginning of March 1936, it realized that it must abandon the hope and the faith which it had placed in the support of the League of Nations. The last session of the Council dealt us another blow. . . .

To-day, is Ethiopia going to be left at the mercy of a pitiless aggressor who already, by an individual act of will, has declared the name of Ethiopia to be struck out of the Book of Life, though Ethiopia is the most ancient empire in the World ?

Before the Council held its meeting on the 11th May there was a struggle behind the scenes between Baron Aloisi and his colleagues. The Italian delegate demanded that the dispute between Italy and Abyssinia should be removed from the agenda on the ground that there was no longer an Abyssinian state to be a party to any international transactions. Baron Aloisi was not induced to abandon this

<sup>1</sup> On the same date, the 11th May, the Abyssinian Minister in London addressed a letter to Mr. Eden protesting against Signor Mussolini's 'claim of annexation of the Empire of Abyssinia to Italy and against his promotion of the King of Italy to the title of Emperor of Abyssinia'. Dr. Martin declared that 'Abyssinia still claims to exist as an independent empire under the protection, and as an integral member of, the League of Nations'.

stand by private consultations which caused the Council meeting to be postponed from 11.0 a.m. to 5.0 p.m.; and when the session was at last opened, and Monsieur Wolde Mariam was duly called by the President (Mr. Eden) to take his place at the Council Table, Baron Aloisi read a declaration stating that the Italian delegation would not consent to the presence at the Council Table of 'the so-called Abyssinian delegation'. He then left the room, followed by his staff—to reappear a short time later in the capacity of *rapporteur* to the Council on a motion relating to a vacant seat on the bench of the Permanent Court of International Justice! During the Italian delegate's brief absence, the Council—at the instance of Mr. Eden, who was supported by Señor de Madariaga and by Dr. Munch—decided unanimously that the Italo-Abyssinian dispute should remain on the Council's agenda; and this decision carried certain important implications. It implied a recognition by the Council that the Abyssinian Government still existed and that Abyssinia was still a state member of the League; and conversely it implied a non-recognition both of the *fait accompli* of the Italian military conquest of the greater part of Abyssinia and also of the unilateral Italian legislative gesture through which Signor Mussolini had affected to transform a lawless seizure into a lawful ownership.

At a private meeting of the delegates of certain members of the Council (not including the representatives of Italy, Argentina, Chilo and Ecuador) which was held on the evening of the 11th, the text of a resolution was drafted; but this time Baron Aloisi was spared the trouble of recording his opposition by the receipt of a telegram from Rome on the morning of the 12th—before the Council had time to reassemble—recalling the whole Italian delegation from Geneva *quam celerrime*.

Accordingly the draft resolution was adopted by the Council on the 12th, with Monsieur Wolde Mariam once again at the Council Table, but without Baron Aloisi's presence. The text ran as follows:

The Council, having met to consider the dispute between Italy and Ethiopia, recalls the conclusions reached and the decisions taken in this matter in the League of Nations since the 3rd October, 1935;

Is of the opinion that further time is necessary to permit its members to consider the situation created by the grave new steps taken by the Italian Government;

Decides to resume its deliberations on this subject on the 15th June and considers that in the meantime there is no cause for modifying the measures previously adopted in collaboration by the members of the League.

It will be noticed that, in this document, the Council merely 'recalled' its previous conclusions and decisions without explicitly reaffirming them, and that, while it did not suggest the abandonment of the existing sanctions, it also did not suggest that they should necessarily be maintained for more than five weeks longer. Yet, hesitant though the language of the resolution was, it was nevertheless too positive to please some of the Latin-American delegates. It is true that the representative of the most important Latin-American state member, Señor Ruiz-Guiñazú (Argentina)—a diplomatist who had played a conspicuous part, as President of the Council, at an earlier stage of the Italo-Ethiopian affair<sup>1</sup>—still maintained his solidarity with his European colleagues; and though he did attach a reservation to his affirmative vote, the Argentinian objection was to the adjournment of the discussion and not to the maintenance of sanctions. On the other hand, an objection to the continuance of sanctions was declared not only by Señor Zaldumbide of Ecuador (whose Government had actually announced their decision to abandon sanctions nearly six weeks earlier)<sup>2</sup> but also by Señor Rivas-Vicuna of Chile; and while the Ecuadorian delegate contented himself with making a reservation on this point without refusing to vote in favour of the resolution, the Chilean delegate went to the length of abstaining. The Chilean Government's view was that 'sanctions ought to be raised because the war was over', while the Ecuadorian Government took the line that 'sanctions had been thought of, and adopted, simply as the means which were considered most appropriate for hastening the end of hostilities'. Señor Zaldumbide also challenged the description of sanctions as 'measures adopted in collaboration'. He reminded his colleagues that the recommendations of the Co-ordination Committee and the Committee of Eighteen had been adopted by each sanction-taking state member of the League individually, in the free exercise of its own sovereignty, and he argued that any state member was equally free to cease at its own discretion, and at whatever moment it might choose, to apply the sanctions as far as its own action was concerned.

It is in this conviction [he added] that my Government has not considered it necessary to submit its decision for previous consideration on the part of the sanctions committee, before proceeding, in the free exercise of its sovereignty, to the raising of sanctions when, in its opinion, these have appeared to be put out of date by events which the sanctions have not succeeded in preventing as they had been intended to do.

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 179 *seqq.*, above.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 472, above.

According to Señor Rivas-Vicuna, the Chilean Government was of opinion that at the present time the abandonment of sanctions 'would contribute effectively to the mitigation of the economic and political crisis which' was 'afflicting the World'. And, at the close of the session, Señor Rivas-Vicuna addressed the following letter to Monsieur Avenol:

I have the honour to inform you that my Government is of opinion that in view of the recent events which have put an end to the war between Ethiopia and Italy it would be proper to discontinue the economic, financial and other measures decided upon in connexion with this conflict. I should be glad if you would communicate my Government's proposal to the competent organs for necessary action.

The Chilean and Ecuadorian attitude on this occasion advertised the possibility of Latin-American defections from the sanctions front; and defections in this quarter might have a serious effect in the case in point, since, in normal circumstances, Latin America was one of the principal export markets for Italian textiles.

On the 13th May the Council adjourned after fixing the date of its next meeting for the 16th June—a day later than the date mentioned in the resolution. The date was chosen with a view to allowing time for a new French Government to assume office after the general election which had been held in France on the 3rd May, and which had resulted, as has been mentioned already, in a victory for the parties co-operating, for the purpose of the election, in the *Front Populaire*. On the 4th June, at Paris, Monsieur Léon Blum duly took office as President of a Council of Ministers recruited from the Socialist and the Radical-Socialist Parties, with the Communists declining to accept ministerial portfolios. But, in the event, Monsieur Blum's assumption of office proved to be of less importance for the shaping of events at Geneva than the decision of the existing Government in Great Britain to advocate the abandonment of sanctions—a decision which was foreshadowed by Mr. Neville Chamberlain on the 10th June, was officially proclaimed on the 18th by Mr. Eden in the House of Commons at Westminster, and was then promptly seconded in Paris by Monsieur Blum and his colleagues at a Cabinet meeting on the 19th.<sup>1</sup>

While the domestic conflict in Great Britain was still being fought out, the programme of procedure at Geneva had been modified in consequence of a request from Argentina that the League Assembly, whose ordinary session in the autumn of 1935 had been prorogued without being officially terminated,<sup>2</sup> should now be re-convened as

<sup>1</sup> See p. 471, above.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 212, above.



well as the Council. This request was made first verbally by the Argentinian delegate, Señor Ruiz-Guiñazú, to the Acting Secretary-General of the League on the 29th May, and was afterwards confirmed in a note which was presented on the 2nd June. Eventually it was arranged that the Council should meet on the 26th June (instead of meeting on the 16th) and the Assembly on the 30th. As a result of this change of programme, the Council virtually remitted the Italo-Abyssinian affair in its last stage (as it had remitted the Sino-Japanese affair in its last stage)<sup>1</sup> to the Assembly,<sup>2</sup> and it was thus this latter body that found itself charged with the thankless and humiliating task of arranging for the liquidation of the measures which had been taken, in partial and ineffectual fulfilment of their obligations under the Covenant, by fifty-two states members.

When the Assembly met, for this third instalment of its sixteenth session, on the 30th June, 1936, it was already evident that it was not starting with a free hand to take whatever course the assembled delegates might agree upon after a fresh, and general, consultation. For, by this date, no fewer than eighteen states members had made at least some move towards the abandonment of the sanctions hitherto in force against Italy. By the 30th June the situation in this regard was as follows: the seven states associated in the group of European neutrals had come to the conclusion, in private discussion among themselves, that the abandonment of the sanctions was inevitable.<sup>3</sup> The United Kingdom, Canadian, Australian, French and Belgian Governments had proclaimed officially, in their own respective countries, that this was the policy which they intended to advocate at Geneva.<sup>4</sup> The Chilean, Uruguayan, and Hondurasian Governments has given notice of corresponding intentions to the Secretariat at Geneva.<sup>5</sup> And, finally, the Ecuadorian, Haitian, and Polish Governments had actually abandoned the application of sanctions so far as Ecuador, Haiti, and Poland themselves were concerned, without waiting for a decision to be reached at Geneva.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See the *Survey for 1933*, Part IV, section (iv).

<sup>2</sup> The only cognizance of the Italo-Abyssinian affair that was taken at the session of the Council on the 26th June was the reading of a letter from Count Ciano, now Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs, in which the Council was informed that, in the present situation, the Italian delegation found itself unable to take part in the proceedings (not only with regard to the Italo-Abyssinian dispute, but also with regard to the Locarno Pact). The letter ended with the expression of a hope that 'the situation would be cleared up in a way which might permit the Italian Government to resume its collaboration with the League of Nations'.

<sup>3</sup> See pp. 473-4, above.

<sup>5</sup> See p. 472, above.

<sup>4</sup> See pp. 471-2, above.

<sup>6</sup> See above, *loc. cit.*

In these circumstances it was already manifest to all concerned, before the reopening of the sixteenth session of the Assembly on the 30th June, 1936, that on this occasion the sanctions in force against Italy were going to be abandoned, that Abyssinia was going to be left to her fate, and that, as far as the League of Nations was officially concerned, the Italo-Abyssinian entry, which had been standing on its agenda since the 4th September, 1935,<sup>1</sup> was now going to be expunged, and a mortifying failure 'liquidated'. Almost the only question still remaining open was whether there was to be a frank admission of the fact—and of the reasons for the fact—that the post-war attempt to establish a reign of law and order in international affairs had now received a shattering defeat at the hands, not only of Italy, but of her fellow states members, or whether, on the contrary, the states members represented at Geneva on this occasion were, with their own hands, to put the finishing touch upon their common humiliation by attempting—in a caricature of old-fashioned Chinese manners—to save a 'face' which had already been lost beyond repair. The preliminary debate, which lasted from the 30th June to the 3rd July inclusive, was dominated by a feeling of failure and discouragement that was unmistakably genuine; and, in most of the speeches that were delivered, some reference (which sometimes, but not always, rang true) was made to the necessity for facing the facts, however disagreeable these might be. Unhappily, however, this pose of stoicism in acquiescing in the annihilation of a fellow state member was not maintained when the time came for passing from speech to action (or rather, to the more difficult performance of attaining the goal of action without appearing to have taken the invidious intervening steps). And it was at this stage that the expiring Ethiopian Empire fought, and lost, its last battle—a battle in which the ill-equipped Abyssinian representatives of Primitive Man in the last of his highland fastnesses were confronted, not with explosive bombs or with sprays of poison gas, but with twists and turns of parliamentary procedure that were products of the same modern Western workshop as Italy's material armaments. In this procedural battle, the President of the Assembly, Monsieur van Zeeland (Belgium), succeeded easily enough in blunting the sharpness of the point which the Ethiopian delegation had sought to put upon the Recording Angel's pencil. But this victory of the General Committee of the Assembly over the Ethiopian delegation was as barren as the Ethiopian delegation's gallantry was superfluous, since it was evidently beyond the range of human power to tamper in either sense

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 168 and 179-80, above.

with an entry that had doubtless already been made in the Book of Judgment.

At this session of the Assembly, both the orators on the 30th June—3rd July and the authors of the General Committee's 'text'<sup>1</sup> followed the British cue—given by Mr. Baldwin on the 5th May<sup>2</sup> and by Mr. Neville Chamberlain on the 10th June<sup>3</sup>—of linking or 'tacking' (in the technical parliamentary phrase) the question of 'reforming' the League of Nations on to that of expunging the Italo-Abyssinian entry out of the League's agenda. A number of motives worked together to move the politicians to confound these two topics which, in spite of their manifest bearing upon one another, were nevertheless perfectly distinct and easily separable. One motive, which was perhaps common to all the statesmen who took this line, was to produce an imposing smoke-screen of discussion on an abstract theme, behind which they could perhaps manage to do the dirty work of making Abyssinia walk the plank without being quite caught in the act of this piratical piece of business by the eyes of a naively indignant world. The other motives were diverse, and in fact diametrically opposed to one another; for the word 'reform' was conveniently ambiguous in its connotation. While the English 'Die-Hards' would perhaps have been glad to see the Government at Westminster use the word in the French sense in which a soldier was 'reformed' by being taken out of the firing-line and declared to be incapacitated for any further active service, such a reform of the League through an excision of Articles 10 and 16 was the very antithesis of the aim of the Russian Government, which hoped to reform the League by sharpening its teeth and claws and by seeing to it that, next time, these means of self-defence should be used in good earnest. The French view of reform was different again; for the true French desideratum seems to have been that the Covenant should be treated as a dead letter in every imaginable contingency except the single case of its being wanted by France herself for use against Germany—in which event, it was to be as live a French wire as the Russians themselves could wish to see it become in their own service.

On the eve of the session of the Assembly in the summer of 1936, and in the course of this session itself, this question of 'the reform of the League' was merely ventilated and exploited, while, for purposes of serious and systematic discussion, it was placed on the agenda of

<sup>1</sup> This neutral word seems the safest term to employ in referring to a document which was defined by the President himself, at the meeting of the Assembly on the 4th July, as embodying not a *décision* but a *vœu* (see p. 509, below). <sup>2</sup> See p. 456, above. <sup>3</sup> See p. 464, above.

the forthcoming session, which was to be held in the autumn of 1936. Accordingly, it would be premature, as well as out of place, to attempt to deal with 'the reform of the League' in the present volume. At the same time, owing to its interlacement with the Italo-Abyssinian conflict in its last phase, it is impossible to avoid all reference to this topic in the present context

It will be seen that, in June and July 1936, the famous 'atmosphere of Geneva' had deteriorated into something that was little better than a miasma of pharisaical hypocrisy, but the air of unruffled blandness, which Monsieur van Zeeland succeeded, almost to the end, in imparting to the proceedings, was so unnaturally forced as to produce the very opposite of the effect that was intended; and the proceedings were also punctuated this time by incidents, 'on the fringe of the Assembly', which might portend the imminent irruption, into this academic cloister, of a neo-barbarism which was now seething and boiling over in the wide world beyond the walls of the Genevan Assembly Hall. On the 30th June, when the Emperor Haile Selassie rose to speak with the treble claim to consideration that was conferred on him by his personality, by his rank, and by his fate, his opening words were drowned in hisses and cat-calls from a gang of Italian journalists in the gallery, who had to be removed—resisting and gesticulating—by the local police<sup>1</sup> before the head of the Ethiopian state could obtain a courteous hearing. In the gallery, again, on the 3rd July, a Jewish journalist who was a citizen of Czechoslovakia made a protest of his own by the tragic act of shooting himself and inflicting a mortal wound—in order to symbolize, in his own person, the bankruptcy of the League of Nations and the martyrdom of the Jewish people throughout the World. There was a third irruption of violence into the proceedings on the 4th July—an irruption which was as ominous as the second and as vulgar as the first. This was made at a meeting of the Council, when Herr Greiser, the Nazi President of the Senate of the Free City of Danzig, hurled insults at the President and members of the Council and cocked snooks at the spectators.<sup>2</sup> It was in vain that Monsieur van Zeeland gave his colleagues verbal assurances, apropos of these unseemly

<sup>1</sup> The offending Italian journalists had to pass the night in prison; but, beyond that, all that they suffered was an official expulsion, for the duration of this session of the Assembly, from the territory—not of the whole Swiss Confederation but merely of the Canton of Geneva.

<sup>2</sup> This Nazi interlude in the proceedings at Geneva on the 4th July, 1936, will be dealt with, in another context, in the *Survey for 1936*; but it requires to be mentioned in this place, in order to indicate the atmosphere in which these sessions of the Assembly and of the Council closed.

interruptions, that 'nothing counted or existed for the Assembly except what passed in its own bosom'. In the sultry stillness and staleness of the Genevan air, these incidents splashed down like those first heavy drops of rain that portend the inevitable onset of a thunderstorm

After this introduction, it remains to give some account of what was said and done in the Assembly from the 30th June to the 4th July.

At the opening of this session, the Assembly was presented with two new documents: a communication, dated the 27th June, which had been addressed to states members of the League, through the Secretary-General, by Dejasmach Nasibu on behalf of the Emperor Haile Selassie, and a note of the 19th June, over the signature of the new Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Count Ciano, which had been addressed on the 29th June to the President of the Assembly.

The points made in the Abyssinian communication were that the Italian military occupation of Ethiopian territory was very far from being complete; that, in the still unoccupied part, there was in existence 'a regular Ethiopian Government, set up by the Emperor himself', on which the Emperor had conferred the necessary powers, and with which he was in communication; that the Emperor maintained all his rights and had never renounced, and was not now renouncing, the exercise of them; and finally—the point which was most pertinent to the time and place—that the Emperor had never renounced, and was not now renouncing, his demand upon each of the states signatories of the Covenant that they should carry out the promises which they had made to Ethiopia—promises which were 'clearly inscribed in the articles of the Covenant by the signature of each of the states members'.

The Italian note consisted, in effect, of three parts. The opening part presented a rose-coloured picture of Italy's action *vis-à-vis* Abyssinia up to date. The middle part set out what a vast amount of welfare work there was to be done in Ethiopia, how ready and willing Italy was to do it, and how glad the native inhabitants were—and were showing themselves to be—to see Italy undertaking this beneficent task. The concluding part offered the League a gilded bridge over which to beat the retreat to which a majority of the states members had now manifestly resigned themselves.

Italy views the work that she has undertaken in Ethiopia as a sacred mission of civilization, and proposes to carry it out according to the principles of the Covenant of the League of Nations and of other international deeds which set forth the duties and tasks of the civilizing Powers. Italy assures equitable treatment to native populations by

promoting their moral and material well-being and their social progress. In order to associate the native populations with this task of social uplifting, native personalities will sit on a Board of Council already formed under the ægis of the General Government. Religious beliefs will be fully respected and all cults will be practised freely, provided that they do not run counter to public order and moral principles. The free use of their original language is guaranteed to each of the races which inhabit Ethiopia [see appendix No. 4]. Slavery and forced labour, which were a blot of infamy on the old régime, are now suppressed [see report of Advisory Commission of Experts on Slavery. League of Nations document No. C. 189]. Taxes levied on the people will be used exclusively to meet local requirements.

Italy, on her part, is willing to accept the principle that natives should not be compelled to other military duties than local policing and territorial defence. Measures will be taken to guarantee freedom of transit and communications and fair treatment for the trade of all countries.

Italy will consider it an honour to inform the League of Nations of the progress achieved in her work of civilizing Ethiopia, of which she has assumed the heavy responsibility.

The note closed with a hint that Italy's fellow state members would find—if once they made up their minds to pay the inevitable price—that a renewal of Italy's co-operation with them was something worth having.

While expecting the League of Nations to appraise the situation now existing in Ethiopia in a spirit of fair understanding, the Italian Government declare themselves ready to give once more their willing and practical co-operation to the League of Nations in order to achieve a settlement of the grave problems upon which rests the future of Europe and of the World. . . . However, the Italian Government cannot but recall the abnormal situation in which Italy has been placed, and the necessity for the immediate removal of such obstacles as have been, and are, in the way of the international co-operation which Italy sincerely seeks, and to which she is prepared to give a tangible contribution for the sake of the maintenance of peace.

To a cynical observer, this Italian note read very much as it might have been written had it emanated at this juncture from the Foreign Office in Downing Street instead of from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome. Had the Duce been privately advised from London that, for stopping the mouths of British 'midsummer madmen', sops, and not kicks, were the appropriate means to employ? Whatever the purpose of the Italian note, it was the only channel through which Italy's voice was heard at Geneva on this occasion; for Italy was not represented by a delegation.

At the meeting of the General Committee (Bureau) of the Assembly which preceded the opening of the Assembly itself, Monsieur Motta

(Switzerland) was reported to have urged, with the support of his Hungarian colleague, that the Emperor Haile Selassie, who had come to Geneva for the express purpose of addressing the Assembly in person, should not be allowed to speak—at any rate, not on the opening day. This suggestion, however, found no wider support; and, after the Assembly had elected Monsieur van Zeeland (Belgium) to be its President in place of Dr. Beneš, who had resigned the Presidency of the League Assembly upon his election to that of the Czechoslovak Republic, the Emperor was the first speaker to be called upon by Monsieur van Zeeland<sup>1</sup> after the Argentinian delegate, Señor Cantilo, who was given the first place of all in his capacity as representative of the state member at whose instance the Assembly had been reconvened.

Señor Cantilo explained that his country's motives in asking for the Assembly to be reconvened had been twofold. On the one hand, Argentina had been concerned (notwithstanding the fact that she herself could be certain of having her say, because she was represented at this time on the Council) to vindicate the principle of the equality of states by securing an opportunity for the Assembly, as the body on which all states members of the League were represented, to be seised of an issue of such gravity as the business which was now on the agenda. On the other hand, Argentina had much at heart the principle of the maintenance of territorial integrity—a principle which, Señor Cantilo explained, was deeply rooted in the tradition of international intercourse in Latin America.

In the Emperor's speech, which followed next, some of the salient passages were the following:

I, Haile Selassie I, Emperor of Ethiopia, am here to-day to claim that justice that is due to my people and the assistance promised to it eight months ago by fifty-two nations who asserted that an act of aggression had been committed in violation of international treaties. None other than the Emperor can address the appeal of the Ethiopian people to these fifty-two nations.

There is perhaps no precedent for a head of a state himself speaking in this Assembly. But there is certainly no precedent for a people being the victim of such wrongs, and being threatened with abandonment to its aggressor.

The Emperor went on to recall, with the vividness of an eyewitness, the successive turns of the screw of Italian 'frightfulness', culminating in the device of spraying clouds of poison gas, broadcast, from the air.

<sup>1</sup> Monsieur van Zeeland himself made a short speech upon taking up the Presidency, and then proceeded, before calling upon other speakers, to read to the Assembly the Italian note.

In order to kill off systematically all living creatures, in order the more surely to poison waters and pastures, the Italian Command made its aircraft pass over and over again. That was its chief method of warfare. The very refinement of barbarism consisted in carrying devastation and terror into the most densely populated parts of the territory—the points farthest removed from the scene of hostilities. The object was to scatter horror and death over a great part of the Ethiopian territory.

These fearful tactics succeeded. Men and animals succumbed. The deadly rain that fell from the aircraft made all those whom it touched fly, shrieking with pain. All who drank the poisoned water or ate the infected food succumbed too, in dreadful suffering. In tens of thousands the victims of the Italian mustard gas died. It was to denounce to the Civilized World the tortures inflicted upon the Ethiopian people that I resolved to come to Geneva.

In passing in review the history of the whole affair on its diplomatic side, the Emperor did not hesitate to denounce the conduct of France:

The Italian provocation was obvious. I did not hesitate to appeal to the League of Nations. . . . Unhappily for Ethiopia this was the time when a certain Government considered that the European situation made it imperative at any price to obtain the friendship of Italy. The price paid was the abandonment of Ethiopian independence to the greed of the Italian Government. This secret agreement, contrary to the obligations of the Covenant, has exerted a great influence over the course of events.<sup>1</sup>

The Emperor ended by coming to grips with the issues pending between himself and the Governments of all the states members of the League other than Abyssinia and Italy:

It was constantly repeated that there was not merely a conflict between the Italian Government and Ethiopia, but also a conflict between the Italian Government and the League of Nations. That is why I refused all proposals to my personal advantage made to me by the Italian Government if only I would betray my people and the Covenant of the League of Nations. I was defending the cause of all small peoples who are threatened with aggression. What have become of the promises that were made to me? . . .

<sup>1</sup> In a later passage, the Emperor denounced France again, this time for sabotaging the application of the oil sanction:

‘It was a profound disappointment to me to note the attitude of a certain Government which, whilst tirelessly protesting its scrupulous attachment to the Covenant, has equally tirelessly striven to prevent its observance. As soon as any measure which was likely to be rapidly effective was proposed, pretexts in one form or another were devised to postpone even consideration of that measure. And the secret agreements of January 1935 provide for this tireless obstruction.’



I assert that the issue before the Assembly to-day is a much wider one [than that of the situation created by Italy's aggression]. It is not merely a question of a settlement in the matter of Italian aggression. It is a question of collective security; of the very existence of the League, of the trust placed by states in international treaties; of the value of promises made to small states that their integrity and their independence shall be respected and assured. It is a choice between the principle of the equality of states and the imposition upon small Powers of the bonds of vassalage. In a word, it is international morality that is at stake. . . .

No subtle reasoning can change the nature of the problem or shift the grounds of the discussion. It is in all sincerity that I submit these considerations to the Assembly. At a time when my people is threatened with extermination, when the support of the League may avert the final blow, I may be allowed to speak with complete frankness, without reticence, in all directness, such as is demanded by the rule of equality between all states members of the League. Apart from the Kingdom of God, there is not on this earth any nation that is higher than any other. If a strong Government finds that it can, with impunity, destroy a weak people, then the hour has struck for that weak people to appeal to the League of Nations to give its judgment in all freedom. God and History will remember your judgment . . .

The initiative has to-day been taken—it is with pain that I record the fact—to raise sanctions. What does this initiative mean in practice but the abandonment of Ethiopia to the aggressor? . . . Placed by the aggressor face to face with the accomplished fact, are states going to set up the terrible precedent of bowing before force?

On the 1st July the principal speakers were Monsieur Blum (France), Mr. de Water (South Africa), Mr. Eden (U.K.) and Monsieur Litvinov (U.S.S.R.). Mr. de Water's speech on this day and Mr. de Valera's on the 2nd were perhaps the only two, in the course of a four days' debate in which the representatives of thirty-two countries took part, that rose to the moral level of the speech of the Emperor Haile Selassie.

With a parochial corporate egotism which was characteristic of the nationalist outlook of the age, Monsieur Blum spoke hardly at all about Ethiopia and almost exclusively about France—a state member of the League whose existence as an independent state was not, at that moment, in immediate jeopardy. Passing over in silence the direct and deadly accusations which had been levelled by the Emperor Haile Selassie at Monsieur Blum's own predecessors in office, the new French Prime Minister exerted himself, first and foremost, to assert that 'the factor known as France' had not ceased to count, or even diminished in importance, in European affairs. Perhaps the most significant passages in his speech were those in which he subscribed to the doctrine of the indivisibility of peace and

announced that France was opposed to any reform of the League in the French military sense of the verb *réformer*.

There is no European conflict in which France might not sooner or later find herself involved, even against her will. Peace, therefore, as we conceive and desire it, is not only the peace of France, but the indivisible peace of Europe and the World. . . .

The cause of the set-back [which the League has just suffered] does not lie in the Covenant. It lies in the tardy, uncertain and confused application of the Covenant. The conclusion to be drawn from this set-back is not that the obligations entailed by the Covenant should be relaxed but rather that they should be strengthened. The French delegation could not therefore accept any plan for reform which would make of the League a merely academic consulting body.

The only direct reference in Monsieur Blum's speech to the actual business on the Assembly's agenda was a complimentary allusion, at the close, to the note from Count Ciano.

Mr. de Water's speech—which merits reproduction *verbatim*, if only space permitted—must be represented here by the following passages, which perhaps convey its main purport:

The Covenant is our international law. How could we allow such a law to be weakened? Yet to-day we know that the Covenant is falling to pieces in our hands. Fifty nations, led by three of the most powerful nations in the world, are about to declare their powerlessness to protect the weakest in their midst from destruction. The authority of the League of Nations is about to come to nought. My Government desires me to say here that this renunciation by the most powerful members of the League of the collective decision most solemnly taken by us all, under the obligation by which we declared ourselves bound, can alone be interpreted as the surrender by them of the authority of the League—a surrender of the high trust and ideals of world peace entrusted to each member nation of this institution.

I am to declare that this surrender, if it is agreed upon by the nations, cannot be interpreted as impotence to safeguard that trust, but as a simple denial of their ability to bear the sacrifices necessary for the fulfilment of their obligations.

The Union of South Africa cannot, without protest, subscribe to a declaration to the World which, in their profound belief, will shatter for generations all international confidence and all hope of realizing world peace. For it is idle to suppose that, by a process of reconstruction thereafter, the League can survive as an instrument of world influence and peace.

This action of the Great Powers—what will it achieve? Where will it lead us now? Before, there was order here. The prestige of the League reborn, the hope of the World running high—this was the picture then. We had succeeded in reducing the disunity of the nations to a single variable—the sanction front of fifty nations; a compression of the disorder of the World into a single manageable group—a vast mass movement, an instinctive drawing together of the nations

of the League Those who stood outside watched silently and were moving nearer in sympathy. But now? The hand is being thrown in. Order is losing to chaos The spectacle of power has hypnotized the World

The nations are arming feverishly—all of us. What will be the end? Where are the Great Powers leading us, who have not the faith to persevere? Are the people of our countries, helpless, inarticulate, like sheep facing the terror, to be fed to those engines of destruction which the nations are so proudly building? If not, for what purpose then are we pouring out our treasure and exhausting the resources of Science in the vastest mass production of armaments ever known to History? . . .

Can it be said, can it be justly claimed, that the triumph of the organized might of Italy over the undisciplined and ill-equipped Black armies of Abyssinia was not foreseeable? Did the fifty nations, when they solemnly bound themselves to collective action under the Covenant of the League, make the successful resistance of Ethiopia a condition precedent to the fulfilment of their collective obligation? . . .

My Government has again examined its own conduct in this matter scrupulously and conscientiously. It can find no new factor in the present situation which did not, in fact or potentially, exist when it announced its decision from this place to honour its obligations and to participate in collective action against the aggressor nation. On the contrary, the destruction of Ethiopian sovereignty by Italy and the annexation of the territory of a country which at no time menaced the safety of Italy, creates now the exact state of affairs which this League was designed to avoid, and which we are all still pledged to prevent by every agreed means in our power, and to refuse to acknowledge.

If the League of Nations were to refuse that vindication to any one of its members, it would disclose itself a mere pretender; should Italy be held to have succeeded in retaining her spoils, not in spite of the authority of the League, but because of the abdication of that authority, what else, then, can this League mean?

If the Great Powers, in whose hands in the last resort lies the safety of nations, accepting success as the yardstick by which the acts of the Covenant-breakers are to be measured, can rebuild on the broken pledge, if these are the policies of realism, let them be demonstrated, so that we may know whether we may continue to collaborate with them in the maintenance and organization of peace.

And so I beg to announce the decision of my Government that it is still prepared to maintain the collective action legitimately agreed upon by the resolution of this Assembly of the League of Nations on the 10th October, 1935.

We offer this course, which, in our deep conviction, will alone maintain the League of Nations as an instrument of security for its members. We commend it to this Assembly even at this eleventh hour as the only way which will ensure salvation to the nations.

After Mr. Massey (Canada) had slightly recharged the atmosphere of the Assembly Hall—to which Mr. de Water had succeeded in imparting a touch of generous warmth—with a faint yet perceptible

breath of North-American isolationism, a third representative of the British Commonwealth of Nations rose to address the Assembly in the person of Mr. Eden.

Mr. Eden's speech, like Mr. te Water's and Mr. de Valera's, was distinguished by a sincerity in deploring, as well as by a frankness in confessing, the tragic failure of the League to uphold the Covenant by saving Abyssinia; and the genuineness and strength of the feeling which was expressed in Mr. Eden's words were the more remarkable in view of the fact that the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs was, in this speech, enunciating to his colleagues in the Assembly the United Kingdom Government's thesis that the sanctions in force against Italy ought now to be abandoned on the ground that it had become impossible to make them effective for their purpose without imposing on the sanction-taking states a prohibitive risk of themselves becoming involved in war.

Mr. Eden's speech in the Assembly Hall at Geneva on the 1st July was, in fact, on much the same lines and in much the same tone as his speech in the House of Commons at Westminster on the 18th June.

Yesterday, we all listened to an appeal by the Emperor of Abyssinia, delivered with a dignity which must have evoked the sympathy of each one of us. Not one of us here present can contemplate, with any measure of satisfaction, the circumstances in which this Assembly meets on this occasion. It is an occasion painful for us all.

In my belief, it is the more necessary, therefore, in the interests of every member of the League, and of the League itself as an organization, that the facts should be squarely faced.

What are they? So far as the application of sanctions in the Italo-Abyssinian dispute is concerned, the members of the League have together and in common applied certain economic and financial measures which they were in a position to impose and which they thought could be made effective by their own action alone—yet we are all conscious to-day that these measures have failed to fulfil the purpose for which they were imposed. It is not that the measures in themselves have been without effect, but that the conditions in which they were expected to operate have not been realized. The course of military events, the local situation in Ethiopia, have brought us to a point at which the sanctions at present in force are incapable of reversing the order of events in that country.

That fact is, unhappily, fundamental. Let me make quite clear, then, the position of the Government I have the honour to represent. Had His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom any reason to believe that the maintenance of existing sanctions, or even the addition to them of other economic measures, would re-establish the position in Ethiopia, then it would be prepared, for its part, to advocate such a policy and, if other members of the League agreed, to join in its applica-

tion. In view of the facts of the present situation in Ethiopia, His Majesty's Government finds it impossible to entertain any such belief. In our view it is only military action that could now produce this result. I cannot believe that, in present world conditions, such military action could be considered a possibility.

This is the situation with which we are confronted. The realities have to be recognized. In the light of them I can only repeat, and repeat with infinite regret, the opinion that I have already expressed on behalf of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom—that, in existing conditions, the continuation of the sanctions at present in force can serve no useful purpose. At the same time, it is the view of His Majesty's Government that this Assembly should not in any way recognize Italy's conquest over Abyssinia. Moreover, if the harsh realities of the situation must determine our attitude towards the maintenance of the measures we have adopted, they cannot, in our judgment, involve any modification of the view of Italy's action expressed by fifty members of the League last autumn.

On the 1st July at Geneva Mr. Eden also repeated an announcement—which he had already made on the 18th June at Westminster—that, in the event of the sanctions being now taken off, the British Government in the United Kingdom were nevertheless prepared, for their part, during 'the temporary period of uncertainty which might ensue', to stand by the reciprocal assurances of mutual support in the Mediterranean in fulfilment of Article 16 of the League Covenant<sup>1</sup> 'in the event of the situation arising which would have brought them into force were action under Article 16 continuing'.<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Eden also associated himself with the French policy regarding the future of the League which had been declared, that morning, by Monsieur Blum; but in this context the British delegate put before the Assembly a pertinent question for consideration.

Was failure due to the fact that there are certain risks which nations are not prepared to run save where their own interests are more directly at stake than they were in this case?

Before sitting down, Mr. Eden also made an allusion to the German factor which, in the background, had been influencing—and perhaps governing—the course of the Italo-Abyssinian affair from first to last.

There is another consideration which it is idle to ignore. This dispute was not an isolated event in a world which had no other cause for

<sup>1</sup> See section (viii) above.

<sup>2</sup> In the House of Commons at Westminster on the 18th June, 1936, the terms of Mr. Eden's statement on this point had been as follows:

'It is the view of the Government that this assurance given by this country should not end with the raising of sanctions but should continue to cover the period of uncertainty which must necessarily follow any termination of action under Article 16.'

anxiety. We, as members of a League which is not universal, are inevitably conscious in more or less degree of the existence of other anxieties.

Monsieur Litvinov, who spoke next, developed, with his usual ability, a thesis which had been adumbrated, that morning, by Monsieur Blum. While admitting, and indeed rubbing in, the disastrousness and the blameworthiness of the fact that, under the Italo-Abyssinian test, the League of Nations, after getting under way, had come to a standstill without having performed its task—and this to the ruin of those who had put their trust in its efficacy—Monsieur Litvinov went on to argue that this miserable performance could not be traced to any inherent defect in the engine of the Genevan machine, but was an inevitable consequence of the (perhaps deliberate) misconduct of the responsible mechanics in starving that engine of the requisite supply of petrol in this particular case. Monsieur Litvinov's moral was that the engine was a perfectly serviceable one, and that this African fiasco was no evidence that the Covenant could not still be made to work properly in a European trial.

We have met here to complete a page in the history of the League of Nations, a page in the history of international life which it will be impossible for us to read without a feeling of bitterness. We have to liquidate a course of action which was begun in fulfilment of our obligations as members of the League to guarantee the independence of one of our fellow members, but which was not carried to its conclusion. Each of us must feel his measure of responsibility and of blame, which is not identical for all, and which depends, not only on what each of us did in fact, but also on the measure of our readiness to support every common action required by the circumstances. . . .

At every stage of discussion of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict, my Government has declared that it would participate in any action provided for under the Covenant and adopted and executed jointly by other members of the League. All the decisions of the Co-ordination Committee were carried out by my Government without exception and with complete loyalty.

However, sooner than might have been expected, the moment came when the necessity for reconsidering the measures adopted at Geneva, from the angle of their serving any useful purpose, became absolutely clear. That moment was when the resistance of the valiant Ethiopian troops was broken, when the Emperor and Government of Ethiopia left their territory, and when a considerable portion of their territory was occupied by the Italian Army. It appeared, then, indubitable that by economic sanctions alone it would be impossible to drive the Italian Army out of Ethiopia and restore the independence of that country, and that such an objective could only be attained by more serious sanctions, including those of a military nature.

Such measures could only be considered if one or several states could be found which, in virtue of their geographical position and special interests, would agree to bear the main brunt of a military encounter. Such states were not to be found among us, and, even if they had been found, the other states, before deciding on any particular degree of co-operation in serious measures, would require guarantees that similar co-operation could also be counted upon in other cases of opposing the aggressor. Such guarantees were all the more necessary because some actions and statements of one European state, whose aggressive intentions leave no room for doubt—indeed, are openly proclaimed by that state itself—indicated an accelerated rate of preparations for aggression in more than one direction. The attitude of some countries to these actions, and the lenient treatment accorded to their authors, shook the belief that those guarantees which I have just mentioned could be immediately secured. In view of these circumstances, I came to the conclusion, even during the May session of the Council of the League, that the further application of economic sanctions was useless, and that it was impossible to afford any practical aid to Ethiopia in this way. It seems that this conclusion was reached by nearly all members of the League. . . .

There have been attempts to ascribe this lack of success to the League Covenant, to its defects and to the present composition of the League. From this are drawn far-reaching conclusions, which may lead to the result that, together with Ethiopian independence, the League itself may turn out to have been buried as well. Such attempts and conclusions must be decisively rejected. . . .

I assert that Article 16 equipped the League of Nations with such powerful weapons that, in the event of their being fully applied, every aggression can be broken. Moreover, the very conviction that they may be applied may rob the aggressor of his zeal to put his criminal intentions into practice. The melancholy experience of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict does not contradict this assertion: on the contrary. In this particular case, whether because this was the first experiment in the application of collective measures; whether because some considered that this case has particular characteristics; whether because it coincided with the preparations elsewhere for aggression on a much larger scale, to which Europe had to devote special attention; whether for these or other reasons, it is a fact that, not only was the whole terrible mechanism of Article 16 not brought into play, but from the very outset there was a manifest striving to confine the action taken to the barest minimum. Even economic sanctions were limited in their scope and their function, and even in this limited scope sanctions were not applied by all members of the League.

Four members of the League, from the very beginning, refused to apply any sanctions whatsoever. One member of the League bordering on Italy refused to apply the most effective sanction—namely, the prohibition of imports from Italy; while, of those countries which raised no objections in principle to sanctions, many did not in actual fact apply several of them, pleading constitutional difficulties, the necessity of 'study', &c. Thus, even the embargo on arms was not

applied by seven members of the League, financial measures by eight countries, prohibition of exports to Italy by ten countries, and prohibition of imports from Italy by thirteen countries—i.e. 25 per cent. of the total membership of the League. It may be said that the Latin-American countries, with a few exceptions, did not apply in practice the more effective sanctions at all . . .

In such circumstances, it may be said that members of the League of Nations, for one reason or another, refrained from bringing Article 16 completely into play. But it does not follow from this that Article 16 itself is a failure.

Monsieur Litvinov then went on to combat, with vigour, the proposal that an attempt should now be made to overcome the present lack of universality of the membership of the League by reducing the content of the Covenant to something that would no longer seem objectionable to any of the Powers that were at present unwilling to subscribe to the Covenant in its original form. In effect, as Monsieur Litvinov pointed out, this would mean the elimination of Articles 10 and 16; and that, he declared, was really a proposal for 'assuring, within the bosom of the League, the security of the aggressor'.

Monsieur Litvinov closed on a note of studied optimism. For his own part, he declared, he felt that a League which had made an effort to give some kind of assistance to a victim of aggression was preferable to a League that had suffered the act of aggression to be perpetrated while it passed by on the other side. He considered that the League had 'taken an enormous step forward' in doing even as much as it had done in the Italo-Abyssinian case. And his last words were:

To-day, more than ever, the League of Nations is an international necessity. It must live and it must be strong—stronger, in fact, than ever.

On the 2nd July the first speaker was Mr. Bruce (Australia), who combined an emphatic advocacy of the abandonment of sanctions with a searching examination of the reasons why they had failed. If, Mr. Bruce contended, the financial, economic and military sanctions contemplated in Article 16 of the Covenant had been applied against Italy in their entirety, it could not be doubted that, in spite of the League's lack of universality, Italy's situation would rapidly have been made untenable; but (the Australian delegate was quick to add) the nations, in spite of their devotion to the principles of the League, were not disposed to involve their peoples in war in a cause in which they did not feel themselves to have any direct national interest; and their present experience had made it evident that the imposition of economic and financial sanctions alone, and



these only within limits that would rule out the risk of reprisals, was a method of applying Article 16 that made success impossible.

Dr. Munch (Denmark) drew a deduction from what had happened which was the more significant because it would presumably have been endorsed by the representatives of all the other six states in the group of European neutrals. While the sanctions that had been applied against Italy had failed to achieve their purpose, it was undeniable, Dr. Munch submitted, that the manner in which they had been applied—and, above all, their abandonment—constituted a precedent which demonstrated the right of states members of the League to decide for themselves, in each case, whether the situation was such as to require them to impose and maintain sanctions—even those of a merely financial and economic order.

Two other representatives of the European neutral group, Monsieur de Graaf (Netherlands) and Monsieur Koht (Norway), who addressed the Assembly on the 2nd and on the 3rd July respectively, both gave warning, apropos of the question of 'reforming' the League, of their countries' distaste for regional pacts.

Perhaps the most distinguished of the speeches delivered on the 2nd July was Mr. de Valera's:

As has been said already, we are all of us in some measure responsible for this pitiable position, some much more responsible than others. Read the speech delivered here by the Emperor of Ethiopia. Does any delegate deny that, so far as it relates to what has happened here, there is, to his knowledge, truth in every line of it?

Perhaps, as the representatives of a small nation that has itself had experience of aggression and dismemberment, the members of the Irish delegation may be more sensitive than others to the plight of Ethiopia. But is there any small nation represented here which does not feel the truth of the warning that what is Ethiopia's fate to-day may well be its own fate to-morrow, should the greed or the ambition of some powerful neighbour prompt its destruction? . . .

The peace of Europe depends, as every one knows, on the will of the Great Powers. If the Great Powers of Europe would only meet now in that Peace Conference which will have to be held after Europe has once more been drenched in blood; if they would be prepared to make now in advance only a tithe of the sacrifice each of them will have to make should the war be begun, the terrible menace which threatens us all to-day could be warded off. . . .

Despite our juridical equality here, in matters such as European peace the small states are powerless. As I have already said, peace is dependent upon the will of the great states. All the small states can do, if the statesmen of the greater states fail in their duty, is resolutely to determine that they will not become the tools of any Great Power, and that they will resist with whatever strength they may possess every attempt to force them into a war against their will.

Mr. de Valera was followed by Sir James Parr (New Zealand), who told his colleagues that at the present time his countrymen were disappointed and uneasy, and then went on to announce that the New Zealand Government (like the South African Government) remained favourable to sanctions, to their maintenance and to their intensification, and that, if an effective majority of the states members of the League were prepared to commit themselves to this course, New Zealand would join them in taking it.

On the 3rd July the new French Minister for Foreign Affairs, Monsieur Delbos, enlarged upon the theme—already propounded by MM. Blum and Litvinov—that a reform of the League ought to mean, not relaxing, but tightening up, the rigour of the Covenant; that there ought to be no serious modification of its terms; but that its efficacy might well be increased by arranging for the conclusion, within a framework of universality, of regional pacts between parties who would undertake, *vis-à-vis* one another, to go to all lengths in putting the Covenant into effect.

On the afternoon of the 3rd July the debate came to an end in two speeches which each sounded a note of warning. The first was delivered by Mademoiselle Hesselgren (Sweden), who—speaking not so much in the name of her country as in that of the women of the World—protested against acquiescence in an international situation which was so desperate and so uncertain that it might deter the women from bringing any more children into the World. The closing speech of all came from Señor Bassols (Mexico).

In face of the *fait accompli*, an attempt is being made to capitalize the experience of defeat—of still another defeat—by reorganizing the forces and international institutions of all countries which are imbued with peaceful and truly civilizing intentions, in order to prevent fresh disasters in a future pregnant with uncertainty and menace.

In the face of this solution two voices have made themselves heard. On the one hand, the concrete and dramatic voice of the Ethiopians, who will suffer, with the stoic resignation of an age-long exploited race, one more affront in the course of history, and who, whether present or no at this Assembly, shall endure as Banquo's ghost called to disturb the tranquillity of Geneva's conscience.

But, on the other hand, there is the equally respectable voice, which likewise deserves our attention, of those who not only consider the specific facts which have called forth this Assembly, but who, more generally, view with suspicion and uncertainty the well-meaning attempt to reconstruct a system of international legal action upon the smoking remains of failure. They believe that the immediate present must necessarily exert its influence as a destructive germ upon all future efforts; and will constitute an internal insoluble contradiction which, sooner or later, will destroy the vitality of the whole system.

While the debate had been verging towards its end, the leading spirits in the Assembly had, behind the scenes, been manoeuvring for position with an eye to the approaching struggle over the trivial question whether the failure of the League to do its duty by Abyssinia should be exposed in form as mercilessly as it already was in fact, or whether the states members should condescend to go through another series of twists and turns in the forlorn hope of salvaging some vestige of their 'face'.

In pressing for a complete exposure, the Ethiopian delegation might count upon the support of many of the Latin-American states members, whose representatives were incensed and disgusted at the unwillingness of the principal European states members to commit themselves unequivocally to the principle of non-recognition of territorial changes when these were accomplished *de facto* through the instrumentality of lawless force. Ethiopia could also count upon the sympathy of the states members of the Balkan and the Little Entente, who had made themselves conspicuous by their silence during the debate, even though they might hesitate to take any positive action that would put a spoke in the wheel of their patrons Russia and France. On the other side stood France, Russia and the United Kingdom, with Belgium (in the presidential chair) at their service.

The first move was made by Ethiopia, when, on the evening of the 2nd July, the Emperor Haile Selassie addressed to the Secretary-General of the League a letter covering two draft resolutions in the following terms:

The Emperor of Ethiopia has put to the nations assembled at Geneva certain questions to which, except for a small number of states, the Powers have not given a precise answer. In the present tragic circumstances, after a debate of capital importance for the existence of the League of Nations and even for the existence of nations who might be threatened by future aggressions, it is important that each country, frankly, loyally, without equivocation or cleverness of language, should take responsibility, by a vote, for its attitude. In order to make possible this clear and frank manifestation of the unanimous or majority sentiment of the nations composing the League, the Emperor of Ethiopia submits to the vote of the Assembly the two following draft resolutions, of which the first does no more than interpret the wish proclaimed by a great number of states in the course of the present discussion:

(1) The Assembly recalls the terms of Articles 10 and 16 of the Covenant, to which it declares its faithful adherence. Accordingly it proclaims that it will recognize no annexation obtained by force.

(2) The Assembly, desirous of affording Ethiopia the assistance to which Article 16 entitles it, in order that it may defend its territorial integrity and political independence, decides to recommend to the

Governments of the states members to give their guarantee to the loan of £10,000,000 which will be issued by Ethiopia under the conditions to be fixed by the Council after an opinion has been given by the Financial Committee of the League of Nations.

This Ethiopian move appears to have caused some perturbation in those quarters in which there was a desire to drape the truth in a veil, no matter how transparent. On the morning of the 3rd July the Assembly authorized its General Committee to examine the two Ethiopian drafts, but it instructed the committee at the same time 'to extract from the discussions of the recent meetings points that might be included in a draft text for subsequent submission to the Assembly'. However, the first endeavours to produce a decorous alternative to the Ethiopian delegation's plain speaking did not meet with success. At a meeting held on the evening of the 3rd July the General Committee proved to be not of one mind; and, after three hours of fruitless consultation, the committee, in desperation, left the task of draughtsmanship to Monsieur van Zeeland. It was not till the morning of the 4th that the President was able to present to the Assembly a draft text that was recommended by the General Committee unanimously.<sup>1</sup> This text read as follows:

I. The Assembly,

(1) having met again on the initiative of the Government of the Argentine Republic, and in pursuance of the decision to adjourn its session taken on the 11th October, 1935, in order to examine the situation arising out of the Italo-Ethiopian dispute;

(2) taking note of the communications and declarations which have been made to it on this subject;

(3) noting that various circumstances have prevented the full application of the Covenant of the League of Nations;

(4) remaining firmly attached to the principles of the Covenant, which are also expressed in other diplomatic instruments such as the declaration of the American states dated the 3rd August, 1932, excluding the settlement of territorial questions by force;<sup>2</sup>

(5) being desirous of strengthening the authority of the League of Nations by adapting the application of these principles to the lessons of experience;

<sup>1</sup> In the General Committee's report, covering the draft text, it was mentioned that the Mexican delegation had 'abstained from taking part in the labours of the General Committee for reasons explained in a letter addressed to the chair'.

<sup>2</sup> This reference was inserted as a sop to the Latin-Americans. It may be noted that Italy was one of the four non-American states which accepted an invitation to adhere to the Rio de Janeiro 'anti-war treaty' of the 10th October, 1933, in which the principle of the non-recognition of territorial changes brought about by force had been incorporated (see the *Survey for 1933*, p. 336).—A. J. T.

(6) being convinced that it is necessary to strengthen the real effectiveness of the guarantees of security which the League affords to its members, recommends that the Council

(a) should invite the Governments of the members of the League to send to the Secretary-General before the 1st September, 1936, any proposals that they may wish to make in order to improve, in the spirit or within the limits laid down above, the application of the principles of the Covenant;

(b) should instruct the Secretary-General to make a first examination and classification of these proposals;

(c) should report to the Assembly at its next meeting on the state of the question.

II. The Assembly, taking note of the communications and declarations which have been made to it on the subject of the situation arising out of the Italo-Ethiopian dispute; recalling the previous findings and decisions in connexion with this dispute; recommends that the Co-ordination Committee should make all necessary proposals to the Governments in order to bring to an end the measures taken by them in execution of Article 16 of the Covenant.

In reading this text to the Assembly, Monsieur van Zeeland expressed the opinion that it covered the intention of the first of the two Abyssinian draft resolutions, while, with regard to the second of these, he recalled that a similar request had already been addressed by Abyssinia to the Committee of Thirteen, and had been rejected by that body, on the 23rd January.<sup>1</sup>

When this text came up for consideration by the Assembly that afternoon, the first speaker was Dejazmach Nasibu; and, in his Government's name, he declared an uncompromising opposition to the line which the General Committee was taking:

On the 3rd July last the Ethiopian Government laid before the President of the Assembly two draft resolutions, the definite object of which was to allow each of the members of the Assembly to assume responsibility by means of a formal vote, frankly, loyally, without ambiguity or tricks of language, for its attitude before the World and before History.

The draft text prepared by the Bureau and unanimously recommended by it to the Assembly does not appear to the Ethiopian delegation to provide such an opportunity. A draft text consisting of a brief statement of reasons, recalling in vague and indefinite terms the events which have occurred and the principles of the Covenant, concludes, for reasons which the Ethiopian delegation fails to understand, not with draft resolutions but with proposals for a recommendation.

The Ethiopian delegation cannot believe that this form has been chosen to evade by subtleties of procedure the categorical decisions which it has asked the Assembly to take.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 329, above.

The Ethiopian delegation energetically maintains the two draft resolutions it has submitted. It ignores the subtleties of procedure, the effect of which would be to obtain a vague and ambiguous vote.

What Ethiopia claims as her right, at this tragic hour of her destiny, is a categorical verdict and not a sentence of death by an implied recommendation, cleverly drafted in terms which, while abandoning the victim to its aggressor, seem to apologize to that aggressor and only affirm respect for the principles of the Covenant in order to save the League's face. Are the principles of the Covenant bending reeds on which certain 'sacred egoisms' can lean until these principles give way?

What Ethiopia asks the Assembly is to express its opinion by an unambiguous vote.

Does the Assembly confirm, yes or no, its unanimous vote of October 1935, declaring that the Italian Government had committed an unjustified aggression against Ethiopia?

Does the Assembly confirm, yes or no, its determination not to recognize the annexation of a territory obtained by force, in violation of the treaties and of the Covenant, at a time when, not only has Ethiopian resistance not been broken, but more than half Ethiopian territory remains outside Italian domination?

Does the Assembly confirm, yes or no, its determination in default of the economic and financial measures whose ineffectiveness is now affirmed, after recording and estimating their considerable results a few weeks ago, to grant to Ethiopia, the victim of aggression, another form of assistance?

That is what the Ethiopian delegation asks while maintaining its draft resolutions. It expressly demands that they should be discussed in order that an explicit vote on each of these resolutions may provide the Ethiopian people with the honest reply to which it is entitled.

The Ethiopian delegate's speech was followed by short statements from the representatives of Panamá, Canada, South Africa and Colombia.

The Panamanian delegate, Señor Solís, expressed an opinion of the General Committee's draft which was not unlike Dejasmuch Nasibu's verdict on it:

The two resolutions proposed do not meet either the Italian point of view, the Ethiopian point of view, the point of view of the principles of international law, of the prestige of the League of Nations, or the anxieties absorbing the attention of the World; they are not even representative of a real, deep desire to furnish a constructive solution of the dispute. It would seem that we are afraid of dealing courageously with a situation which, whatever its tendency, is clearly defined.

Mr. te Water announced that he would not associate himself with the General Committee's draft in any way, and that he would abstain from voting if the draft were put to the vote in the Assembly.

In spite of this apparently rather unpromising reception of the

General Committee's draft, the President showed himself equal to the task which he had taken it upon himself to perform. When the Ethiopian delegation demanded that the Ethiopian resolutions should be given priority over the General Committee's draft, Monsieur van Zeeland submitted that it was 'one of the normal rules of deliberative assemblies to give priority to a text prepared by an organ to whom you have assigned that duty'; and, taking silence for assent, he proceeded to put the General Committee's text to the vote by roll-call. The results were:

Votes in favour	.	.	.	44
Votes against	.	.	.	1
Abstentions	.	.	.	4

The states members that abstained from voting were Chile, Mexico, Panamá and South Africa. The single adverse vote was cast by Abyssinia herself.

When the President was then reminded of the unanimity rule, he remarked that it was not a question of a 'decision' taken by the Assembly, but merely of a *vœu*, and that, according to the practice followed by the Assembly from the start, *vœux* could be adopted by a majority vote. Turning next to the Ethiopian delegation's demand that its own two resolutions (which had been submitted in due form, as Monsieur van Zeeland himself confessed) should be put to the vote at any rate at this stage, Monsieur van Zeeland ruled that the first Ethiopian resolution was covered by the Assembly's *vœu*, and—again taking silence for assent—he passed on to the second Ethiopian resolution and in this case accepted the Ethiopian demand for a vote by roll-call. This time the results were:

Votes in favour	.	.	.	1
Votes against	.	.	.	23
Abstentions	.	.	.	25

And it was Abyssinia, once again, who found herself in a minority of one.

When the results of these two votes taken in the Assembly on the 4th July, 1936, are compared with what had happened at the session of the same body in October 1935,<sup>1</sup> it will be seen that the bare figures constitute a *reductio ad absurdum* of the judgment that the League had pronounced and of the measures that it had taken. In October 1935 Italy, condemned as an aggressor, had found at any rate three states members of the League to save her from the ordeal

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 208 *seqq.*, above.

of complete isolation by publicly taking her side. And now, less than nine months later, Abyssinia—left, twice over, in a minority of one—was being penalized, for the double offence of having been conquered by Italy and having been abandoned by the League, to a degree which Italy had been spared when she was being condemned by her peers for the flagrant and deliberate commission of a supreme crime against international law and justice. In making themselves responsible for this paradox, the states members of the League were of course condemning neither Italy nor Abyssinia so much as themselves.

The proceedings at the meeting of the Assembly on the afternoon of the 4th July, 1936, ended with a closing presidential allocution to the delegates of forty-eight nations from the mouth of Monsieur van Zeeland.

The speaker began by disclaiming any intention of offering the Assembly the customary presidential congratulations on the results of the work of the session; but he went on to tell them, nevertheless, that they had 'had the difficult courage to look realities in the face'; and he sought to console them for the 'set-back' which the League had received by reminding them that they had 'limited the possibilities of gaining control of the situation' from the moment when, in the foregoing October, they had decided that the League's collective action should be limited to measures of an economic and financial nature. Having thus implicitly accused Abyssinia's fellow states members of never having had any serious intention of doing what was required if Abyssinia was to be saved from her impending fate, Monsieur van Zeeland had the audacity to ask his colleagues which of them—'if by the malice of Fate he was to find himself one day in a situation like that of Ethiopia—would not be glad, in default of something better, to see economic and financial sanctions applied to his aggressor by fifty countries'. Finding himself unable to ignore the Abyssinian opinion of what the League had done—or failed to do—Monsieur van Zeeland proceeded to confer a pontifical absolution upon his colleagues and himself:

I do not consider that all the criticisms—however understandable—which have been by implication brought against us are deserved. I have, in so far as I myself and my country are concerned, once more searched my own conscience. I believe that many of you, were you to do the same, would reach the same conclusion as ourselves. We have, indeed, faithfully applied the rules of collective security; we have unhesitatingly borne our share, to the full extent of our undertakings, in all the collective measures which the League has proposed. . . . I believe that those amongst us who have acted in this way can, even after what has taken place, claim that their conscience is clear; they



have contributed to the work, which we are here attempting to promote, everything which it was in their power to give.

This self-complacent judgment upon the record of the states members of the League of Nations during the past nine months fell with a strange incongruity from the lips of a President of the Assembly who happened at the same time to be the Prime Minister of Belgium ; for in 1936 it would have been impossible for any one claiming to represent the Belgian Government to present at Geneva any credentials that would have been recognizable as valid, supposing that, in the ordeal of 1914-18, the states that had subsequently become members of a League of Nations had acted towards Belgium, before the foundation of the League, as they had been acting in 1935-6 towards their Abyssinian fellow state member. If, on the 4th July, 1936, the sun had turned backwards in his course at the challenge of Monsieur van Zeeland's words, and the order of time had been reversed, the treatment of Abyssinia in 1935-6 would have constituted a calamitous precedent for Belgium in 1914.

In 1914 the Germans occupied effectively, by military force, the whole of Belgium, except for a patch of sand-dunes in one corner of the country,<sup>1</sup> in one third of the time that it took the Italians, in 1935-6, to achieve a skeleton military occupation of about two-thirds of the Empire of Ethiopia.<sup>2</sup> On the 13th October, 1914, the Belgian Government left Ostend to find asylum abroad at Le Havre in France—leaving behind on Belgian soil not even an acting civil Government, but merely the remnant of a heavily defeated Belgian army. On the analogy of the treatment of Abyssinia by her fellow states members of the League in 1936, the co-signatories, with Germany, of the guarantee treaty of 1839, which was Belgium's pre-war Covenant, would have been entitled, before the close of the year 1914, to make their private peace with the German aggressor, to abandon Belgium to her fate, to refuse all further loans to the refugee Belgian Government, and to cut off the supply of arms and munitions of war from Great Britain and France to the remnant of the Belgian army on the Yser, on the ground that Germany had unfortunately now succeeded in achieving her object owing to the unexpectedly rapid

<sup>1</sup> On this particular point, the Serbian experience in the War of 1914-18 is still more striking than the Belgian ; for, during more than three years of that war, the entire territory of Serbia (as well as the entire territory of Montenegro) was under effective enemy occupation, and the Serbian troops that remained under arms on active service were serving on foreign soil throughout that period.

<sup>2</sup> The Italians invaded Abyssinia on the 3rd October, 1935, and entered Addis Ababa on the 5th May, 1936. The Germans invaded Belgium on the 4th August, 1914, and entered Antwerp on the 10th October of the same year.

collapse of the Belgian military resistance. But actually the Allied Powers in 1914 would not have needed to sound the 'Cease Fire'; for, if the analogy with 1935-6 is pressed home, it is evident that they would have been exempted from going to war with Germany in the first instance. The British retort to the German invasion of Belgium on the 4th August, 1914, in breach of the treaty of 1839, would have been merely to apply against Germany a set of financial and economic sanctions which would have been carefully selected so as not to inconvenience Germany, in the conduct of her war against Belgium, France and Russia, to a degree that might perhaps exasperate her into retaliating by making war upon Great Britain as well. This analogy affords a pertinent critique of Monsieur van Zeeland's closing speech at the afternoon meeting of the League of Nations Assembly at Geneva on the 4th July, 1936.

It remains to record that, at Geneva on the 6th July, the delegates of the states which had been represented, during the preceding week, at the Assembly, resolved themselves into the Co-ordination Committee and carried out the second part of the Assembly's *vœu* of the 4th July by recommending collectively to one another that they should cease to apply the sanctions against Italy as from the 15th July.<sup>1</sup> Before that date was reached, it became known that the French Government took the view that, upon the abandonment of action against Italy under Article 16 of the League Covenant, the mutual assurances of reciprocal support in the Mediterranean which had been exchanged between France and Great Britain<sup>2</sup> automatically ceased to be operative.<sup>3</sup>

In Rome, the 15th July, 1936, was celebrated by Signor Mussolini in the following address, which he delivered from the balcony of the Palazzo Venezia to an audience of 50,000 people.

To-day, the 15th July of the year 14 of the Fascist era, a white flag has been hoisted in the ranks of world 'sanctionism'. We would like to see in it not only a sign of surrender but also a symptom of the return to common sense.

The merit of this great victory in every field of economy goes wholly to the Italian people; it goes to the women, to the men, and to the children of Italy.

No one has trembled, no one has flinched; all were ready for any sacrifice, so deep was in all hearts the certainty that civilization and

<sup>1</sup> At this meeting of the Co-ordination Committee on the 6th July, 1936, the Polish delegate mentioned that the Committee's recommendations had already been anticipated by the action of his own country.

<sup>2</sup> See section (viii), above.

<sup>3</sup> Statement by Mr. Eden in the House of Commons at Westminster, in answer to a parliamentary question, on the 15th July, 1936.

justice would in the end triumph both in Africa and in Europe. It has come under the sign of the invincible lictors, and so it will come to-morrow and always.

On the same day in the same place it was announced that the Italian forces in Libya were now to be reduced, as an act of 'equivalent demobilization', in response to a statement which had been made on the 9th July in the House of Commons at Westminster by Sir Samuel Hoare in his new rôle as First Lord of the Admiralty. This British statement was that, while there was 'no intention of withdrawing the British fleet from the Mediterranean', it was 'proposed to release, at a very early date, those units which were sent temporarily to the Mediterranean from the home station and from other stations abroad'.

The liquidation of the Anglo-Turkish, Anglo-Greek and Anglo-Yugoslav mutual assurances of reciprocal support in the Mediterranean was announced by Mr. Eden in the House of Commons at Westminster on the 27th July—on the representation that 'happily there' were 'now specific grounds for affirming that the position of uncertainty' to which Mr. Eden had referred at Westminster on the 18th June and at Geneva on the 1st July had 'now been brought to an end'. The diplomatic developments in this domain during the intervening weeks were reported in the following terms by Mr. Eden on this occasion:

About the middle of this month the Italian Government made to the Governments of Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey a spontaneous declaration. The substance of these messages has since been communicated to me in London by the Italian Chargé d'Affaires. From this communication it emerges clearly that the Italian Government have themselves approached the Turkish, Yugoslav and Greek Governments and have given to each of those three Governments the most clear assurances that Italy has never contemplated, nor is contemplating, any aggressive action against any of them in retaliation for their past sanctionist policy. In expressing these views the Italian representatives in each of these three capitals have also emphasized that Italy considers the sanctions chapter as being definitely and completely over and that she looks confidently forward towards a new period of mutual co-operation among all nations. The Italian Government have also recalled that between Italy and Greece and between Italy and Turkey treaties of friendship are in existence with which Italy has never failed to comply and which the Italian Government intend fully to respect.<sup>1</sup> With Yugoslavia Italy intends no less to develop the same good relationship she enjoys with Turkey and Greece.

I hope [Mr. Eden continued] the Committee will agree that the information which I have just given, and which I must remind the

<sup>1</sup> The Italo-Greek and the Italo-Turkish treaty were, of course, instruments of the same type as the Italo-Abyssinian treaty of 1928.—A. J. T.

Committee was specifically given to me by the Italian Chargé d'Affaires in a memorandum, fully justifies the conclusion that the circumstances which, in the view of His Majesty's Government, had made it desirable to give these assurances, no longer exist. I am, therefore, glad to be able to recognize and to declare that, in the view of His Majesty's Government, there is now no further need for the continuance of these assurances.

Thus, before the end of July 1936, the grave in which the dead sanctions against Italy lay newly buried had been ploughed over with such effect that, for an artless eye, it already might have been difficult to detect that there had been an interment.

**(xv) The Situation in Abyssinia during the Great Rains of 1936 and the Examination of the Credentials of the Abyssinian Delegation to the Seventeenth Assembly of the League of Nations.**

Before the opening of the session of the League Assembly on the 30th June, 1936, it was already manifest that Abyssinia's fellow states members intended to abandon her to her fate; and little material difference was made by the proceedings at Geneva of the 30th June—4th July; for, while the Co-ordination Committee did take the positive step of recommending, on the 6th July, the discontinuance of the sanctions previously in force against Italy, the text of the *vœu* that had been adopted by the Assembly itself on the 4th July left it an open question whether or not the 'firm attachment' of forty-four states members to the principle of ruling out the settlement of territorial questions by force was to receive even a formal application in a permanent non-recognition of the accomplished fact of an Italian military conquest of the Empire of Ethiopia.

Before the Assembly dissolved the cynics were already prophesying that the League would now be able to dispense with the brutal and invidiously self-condemnatory act of striking the name of Abyssinia off the roll of states members.<sup>1</sup> Italian purposes, it was being suggested, would be sufficiently well served if, at future meetings of the Assembly or any other organs of the League on which Abyssinia might claim to be represented, the credentials of any

<sup>1</sup> On the 21st June, 1936, Austria did implicitly recognize Italian sovereignty over Abyssinia when a new Austrian Minister in Rome presented his letters of credence to 'the King of Italy and Emperor of Ethiopia'. On the other hand, three other new Ministers—accredited to the Court of the Quirinal by Egypt, Haiti and Iran—who were received at the same time presented their credentials simply to 'the King of Italy'. On the 7th July the Republic of San Marino decided to recognize the annexation of Abyssinia, and similar action on the part of Germany was foreshadowed on the 25th July by the announcement that the German Legation at Addis Ababa was to be replaced by a Consulate-General. The German Government's formal recognition of the Italian Empire was announced on the 24th October, 1936, when the Italian Foreign Minister was on a visit to Germany.

persons henceforth professing themselves to be the Imperial Ethiopian Government's accredited representatives were always found, by the authorities duly constituted for the purpose, to be not sufficiently in order to justify the pretenders' claim to act for a country which would still be fully entitled to exercise its unabated rights, as a good and true member of the League, if only this tiresome point of order did not keep on getting in the way. A manœuvre of the kind that had been foreshadowed was in fact attempted—though, for the moment, without success—when the Assembly met again in September 1936 for its seventeenth ordinary session; and on this occasion the question whether the Emperor Haile Selassie's Government was or was not still entitled to representation at Geneva partly turned on the question whether, since the Emperor's departure from Ethiopian territory on the 2nd May, 1936, and since the military occupation of his capital, Addis Ababa, on the 5th, a legitimate and effective Ethiopian Government was, or was not, still in existence at any point within the Ethiopian frontiers.

In previous chapters it has already been recorded that the existence of such a Government was affirmed by the Ethiopian Minister in London in a letter which appeared in *The Times* on the 8th May<sup>1</sup> and that, in the House of Commons at Westminster on the 11th May, Mr. Baldwin had stated his belief in the existence of such a Government in Ethiopia at that date.<sup>2</sup> The seat of this surviving Ethiopian Government on Ethiopian soil was credibly reported to be at Gore, in the south-west.

In the course of the debate in the House of Commons at Westminster on the 18th June, Mr. Lloyd George asked Mr. Eden whether His Majesty's Government were 'going to stop the whole trade in arms with Abyssinia by closing the frontiers' between that country and the surrounding British or British-administered territories; and Mr. Eden stated, in reply, that, according to his information, 'the independent Galla tribes' in that region of Western Abyssinia where the Italians were not in occupation were 'strongly hostile to the Emperor's administration' and that in this region there was 'no Abyssinian authority'. In the same place on the 22nd June, in replying to a parliamentary question, the Foreign Secretary reaffirmed these statements, and went on to declare that

His Majesty's Government evidently could not allow arms to go from the Sudan into Western Abyssinia so long as there is no probability

<sup>1</sup> See p. 357, above.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 357, above. The existence of the Government was also affirmed by the Emperor Haile Selassie himself in a statement to the press at Geneva on the 26th June.

that the arms would be received by any constituted authority or serve any purpose other than that of promoting civil war. I have informed the Ethiopian Minister in London in that sense.

In the colloquy that followed, Mr. Mander said that 'he understood from what the Foreign Secretary had said that if there were a Government in Western Abyssinia there would be no objection to arms going in'; and Mr. Eden conceded that 'that would be an entirely new situation'.

On the 23rd June *The Times* published a letter of the 20th June from Lord Lugard in which the latter quoted Colonel Sandford—a British officer with a long first-hand experience in Abyssinia in the Ethiopian Government's service<sup>1</sup>—as a witness to the fact that at this time the Ethiopian Government was still in existence and still functioning in a number of places. The names of these places were given by Colonel Sandford, but Lord Lugard judged that it was 'perhaps advisable not to repeat' them. This testimony was cited by one of the Opposition speakers, Dr. Dalton, in the debate on the 23rd June in the House of Commons at Westminster; and it was taken by him as a ground for the following specific question to the Prime Minister:

Are you going, in the event of a nucleus of resistance still showing itself in Western Abyssinia, to do anything to enable these unfortunate people, in their gallant fight against enormous odds, to get either arms, on the one hand, or, on the other hand, gas masks as an instrument of passive defence?

On this point, Mr. Baldwin's reply that evening was as follows:

The situation in the west and south-west of Abyssinia is extremely confused. In the greater part of that area, the population consists of non-Amharic tribes who have become hostile to Abyssinian rule. This state of affairs has been intensified by the fact that there is no central Abyssinian Government in the country. There may be, here and there, a local governor, with a number of troops. Since the debate last week the existence of one such has come to my right hon. friend's notice—although I am told that his authority is extremely limited—and there may be others in a similar position. None of them, so far as we are aware, are in touch with any authority, within Abyssinia, representing the central Government. . . . Though arms could be sent to Gore, it seems clear from the condition of the country that they could not be conveyed from there to any other locality in west or south-west Abyssinia with any certainty of their reaching their destination. . . . There is no intention of imposing an embargo on the shipment of arms from this country to Abyssinia, but arms can only be passed across the frontier from the Sudan, or wherever it may be, if they are consigned

<sup>1</sup> See p. 114, footnote, above.

to a properly constituted authority and if that authority is in a position to take delivery.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, on the 15th July, 1936, the day on which the Government of the United Kingdom, simultaneously with the Governments of the other sanction-taking states, abandoned the embargo upon the export of arms to Italy and to the Italian colonies, it remained to be seen whether the embargo on the export of arms to Abyssinia outside the zone of Italian occupation—an embargo which had been re-imposed before the 22nd June by the United Kingdom Government—was to remain in force.

Meanwhile, it was evident that the Italian military occupation of the Ethiopian Empire was neither complete nor effective; for while there was still about one-third of the territory of the Empire, in the west and south-west, where the Italian armed forces had as yet made no *acte de présence* at all, it was also apparent that, even in the remainder of the country, the Italian military occupation had confined itself, up to date, to a 'ribbon development' which had left untouched a number of enclaves of territory—some of them of considerable extent—in the wide interstices between the main lines of communication.

In the extreme west of the unoccupied portion of Abyssinia, in the Lohemti district of Wallega, on the 28th June, an Italian reconnaissance party which had landed there from three aeroplanes was promptly set upon, and all but one member of the party were killed.<sup>2</sup> Within the zone of Italian occupation, along the Djibouti-Addis Ababa Railway, on the 6th July, a band of Abyssinian guerrillas cut the telephone and telegraph wires and tore up a stretch of the rails between Akaki and Mojjo, with intent to hold up two Italian supply trains; and, although the arrival of an Italian force frustrated the execution of this part of the raiders' plan, what they did succeed in achieving was already enough to demonstrate that, even in a section of the occupied zone which it was both particularly easy and particularly important for the Italians to patrol, the Italian occupation was still far from perfect. Thereafter, on the 28th July, the Italian outposts south of—but, apparently, at no great distance from—Addis Ababa itself had to beat off an attack by a party of

<sup>1</sup> This description of the situation in south-western Abyssinia was repeated, in substance, a month later, by Mr. Eden, in a statement—made in answer to a parliamentary question—in which he cited the latest reports that had been received, up to that date, at Downing Street from the British Consul at Gore.

<sup>2</sup> The party had set out by air from Addis Ababa on the 26th June. The casualties included a General who was at that time Deputy Chief of the Italian Air Force in Abyssinia.

Abyssinian troops which was believed to have been under the leadership of a son of Ras Kassa, Dejazmach Aberra.<sup>1</sup>

At this time the Italian forces in Ethiopia were, no doubt, labouring under two handicaps: in the first place, under the excessive rapidity with which they had carried out their occupation (as far as it had gone) in the latest stage, with a view to forestalling the Great Rains; and in the second place under the seasonally adverse climatic conditions produced by the advent of the rains themselves. It remained to be seen how the Italian army of occupation and the Abyssinian fighting-men who were still under arms against the intruders would fare respectively when the first anniversary of the Italian invasion of Abyssinia on the 3rd October, 1935, brought with it a return of the dry season. Meanwhile, on the 16th September, 1936, the following account of the situation in Abyssinia at that moment was given in a statement issued to the press on that date by the Abyssinian Legation in London:

In spite of the continuance of the war, the Government in the West has been functioning normally under the Governorship of Betwadad Walda Tadjik, President of the Senate, assisted by Ras Imru, and by a Council composed of several chiefs chosen from among the representatives of different provinces of the Empire. He exercises his powers in the name and in accordance with the instructions of H.M. the Emperor Haile Selassie. He has reaffirmed his loyalty to the Emperor and to the constitution. In spite of considerable difficulties he has maintained direct liaison and communication with the Emperor. Peace reigns and public security is maintained and taxes in general are being collected in a normal manner in by far the greater part of the territories into which Italian forces have not yet penetrated. In these territories the civil and military Governors and judges are still those who were appointed by H.M. the Emperor before hostilities commenced. The occupation by the Italians of the country, far from being extended, has in some places been confined to certain points and in others troops have had to be entirely withdrawn. This has been due partly to the setting in of the rainy season which has prevented movements of the Italian troops and precluded the employment of their weapons of destruction and terror, and partly to the fact that the Ethiopian population has recovered from the effects of the first shock of surprise, and is opposing *à outrance* the Italian advance.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Italians claimed to have repulsed these Abyssinian raiders with heavy losses—including the death of Dejazmach Aberra himself.

<sup>2</sup> The contention put forward in the passage here quoted was supported by a detailed list of the Ethiopian territories in which the Emperor claimed that his own régime was still continuing to function undisturbed. On the other hand, a rather different picture of the situation of the moment in Abyssinia (a picture which also throws light upon the statements of Ministers in the House of Commons at Westminster in June and July 1936) was presented in a letter from Mr. Eden to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations which was



On the day on which this statement was made public the Abyssinian Legation in London also announced that Abyssinia was sending to the session of the League Assembly which was to open at Geneva on the 21st a delegation consisting of the Minister accredited to the Court of St. James's, Dr. Martin; the President of the Special Court, Monsieur Tæzaz; and the French Legal Adviser to the Abyssinian Government, Professor Jèze. During the next few days reports from Rome indicated that, while Italy did not intend to insist upon her annexation of the Empire of Ethiopia being recognized by her fellow states members as a necessary condition for the resumption by Italy of her active participation in the League's activities, she did make it a condition that she should find at Geneva no delegation claiming to represent the Emperor Haile Selassie. Accordingly an Italian delegation to the forthcoming session of the Assembly would not put in an appearance at Geneva unless and until the credentials of the persons purporting to be Ethiopian delegates had been rejected by the Assembly's Credentials Committee

communicated by the latter to the Council and the states members on the 26th September, 1936: that is, three days after the Assembly had decided, on the 23rd of that month, to allow the Abyssinian delegate to sit during the session then in course (see p 525, below) Mr. Eden informed Monsieur Avenol that, in June and July 1936, certain Galla chiefs in the south-west had asked the British Consul at Gore and the British Commissioner for the Sudanese district of Gambela to help them to forward to Geneva a petition requesting that a mandate over Western Ethiopia should be conferred on the United Kingdom, but the British Secretary of State added that the would-be petitioners had been informed that the British Government were not in a position to fall in with this request. Mr. Eden also reported that towards the end of July a serious conflict between Gallas and Amharas had broken out in Jimma, and that the Sultan of Gumai had asked the British consul at Gore to transmit to his Government a request that these disorders (which appear to have arisen out of an attempt on the part of the local Amhara garrison to collect taxes) should be brought to the attention of the League of Nations. In a letter of the 28th September to Monsieur Avenol, one of the Ethiopian delegates to the Assembly, Monsieur Tæzaz, confirmed the accuracy of the first of Mr. Eden's two pieces of information, while submitting that the Sultan of Gumai's account of what had happened in Jimma ought not to be accepted without corroboration. In the meantime the British Government had been taking steps to ensure themselves against any possibility of becoming involved politically in South-Western Ethiopia when the end of the Great Rains would lay the country open again for a fresh advance on the part of the Italian invaders. The British consulates at Mega and Maji were closed in May and June 1936; and the British consul at Gore, Captain Erskine, who stayed on through the summer to look after the interests of the foreign merchants and missionaries in his district (some 400 persons all told), finally closed his consulate on the 28th September and arrived safely at Gambela, in Sudanese territory, on the 10th October. Captain Erskine had actually remained at his post, in the interests of the foreign residents and native inhabitants of his consular district, for several weeks after the order to withdraw had reached him.—A. J. T.

At this moment, on the eve of the opening of the new session at Geneva, it was generally expected, both in Italy and elsewhere, that the exclusion of the Ethiopian delegation and the return of the Italian delegation were foregone conclusions; for the Italian Government's position was believed to have been explained to the Secretary-General of the League, Monsieur Avenol, on the occasion of a visit which he had paid to the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Count Ciano, at Rome, on the 8th-9th September;<sup>1</sup> and it was also believed that, in this mission, Monsieur Avenol had in effect been acting as a go-between in an intrigue between the French and British Governments on the one hand and the Italian Government on the other. On the assumption that the position which the Italian Government had taken up had already been privately communicated by Monsieur Avenol to the French and British Governments and had then been intimated by them to be acceptable from their point of view, it was generally taken for granted that these two Powers, acting in concert, would now be able to find ways and means of inducing the other states members represented in the Assembly to bring the Italians back to Geneva on the Italian terms. The essential means to this end was to secure the appointment of a Credentials Committee of the Assembly which might be counted upon to interpret the Covenant of the League and the Assembly's own rules of procedure in a way which would exclude from admission the Abyssinian delegation which was now about to present itself; and at this point it may be convenient to cite the relevant legal texts before recording the political sequel.

In Article 3 of the Covenant, paragraph 1, it was laid down that the Assembly was to 'consist of representatives of the members of the League'; but the Covenant itself contained no statement of the circumstances in which membership, when once acquired, was to be deemed to have been forfeited. The Covenant merely contained (in Article 1, paragraph 1, and Annex) a list of original members and of

<sup>1</sup> Monsieur Avenol gave an account of his visit to Rome to the Council of the League at a private session on the 18th September. According to an unofficial report which was subsequently published in the press, Monsieur Avenol told the Council that, on receiving an assurance that the Italian Government did not intend to raise the question of the status of Abyssinia, and that the attendance of Italian representatives at the Assembly would depend solely upon the presence or absence of an Abyssinian delegation, he had replied 'that in that case the only question was whether the Abyssinian delegation would submit valid credentials or not. If the credentials were valid the question would remain open, and if they were not it would be necessary to take stock of the position.' (*The Times*, 24th September, 1936.)

states which were at once invited to accede without being asked to fulfil any special conditions; a statement (in Article 1, paragraph 2) of the conditions on which other states, not mentioned in either part of the aforesaid list, might subsequently apply for admission to membership, and in the third place a statement (in Article 1, paragraph 3) of the conditions on which any member of the League might voluntarily withdraw. The only light that could be extracted from the Covenant in regard to the conditions on which a state member which still desired to retain its membership and to continue to participate in the League's activities might be either expelled from the League outright or suspended from active participation was to be obtained by drawing an analogy from the conditions (set out in Article 1, paragraph 2) which had to be fulfilled by a candidate for admission not named in the Annex; and these conditions were conceived as follows:

Any fully self-governing State, Dominion or Colony not named in the Annex may become a Member of the League if its admission is agreed to by two-thirds of the Assembly, provided that it shall give effective guarantees of its sincere intention to observe its international obligations, and shall accept such regulations as may be prescribed by the League in regard to its military, naval and air forces and armaments

If these were also to be taken as the conditions which any and every member of the League must continue to fulfil if it was to continue to be entitled to retain and to exercise its membership, then, to a layman's eye, it might look as though Abyssinia were the only name on the previous roll of members which might possibly still have some claim to escape erasure in September 1936; for while it was perhaps a debatable question whether at this date Abyssinia was still a 'fully self-governing state', it might have been supposed that, in the light of the events of the past twelve months, it would be impossible either for Italy, who was now a certified and unrepentant covenant-breaker, or for her fellow states members other than Abyssinia, who had all failed, by omission, to fulfil their own undertakings under Articles 10 and 16, to convince any conscientious Credentials Committee of the Assembly that the 'guarantees' which they had given of their 'sincere intention to observe' their 'international obligations' could still be considered 'effective'.

No additional light on the conditions for continuing to enjoy the rights of membership, when once these rights had been acquired, was to be found in those passages of the Assembly's Rules of Procedure which dealt with the presentation and verification of the credentials

of representatives. The relevant passages ran as follows in the text which governed the proceedings in September 1936:<sup>1</sup>

*Rule 5.*

1. Each member shall communicate to the Secretary-General, if possible one week<sup>2</sup> before the date fixed for the opening of the session, the names of its representatives, of whom there shall not be more than three. The names of substitute representatives may be added.

2 The full powers of the representatives shall be delivered to the Secretary-General, if possible, one week before the date fixed for the opening of the session. They shall be issued either by the head of the state or by the Minister for Foreign Affairs.<sup>3</sup>

3. A committee of nine members for the examination of the credentials shall be elected by the Assembly on the proposal of the President.<sup>4</sup> The committee shall report without delay

4 Any representative to whose admission objection has been made shall sit provisionally with the same rights as other representatives, unless the Assembly decides otherwise.

The Abyssinian delegation had already suffered one casualty before setting out for Geneva; for Professor Jèze had been deterred from attendance by pressure from the Government of the country of which the Emperor Haile Selassie's legal adviser was a citizen and an official.<sup>5</sup> But the vacant place was filled by the Emperor's American adviser, Mr. Colson; the two other appointees duly travelled; and the British and French delegations were thus confronted with the necessity of taking steps to secure the exclusion of Mr. Colson, Dr. Martin and Monsieur Tazaz if they were not to resign themselves to the continued absence of the Italians.

The first step that MM. Delbos and Eden did take in these circumstances seems to have been to canvass the delegations to the Assembly for volunteers who would agree to serve on the Credentials Committee on the understanding that they were pledging themselves in

<sup>1</sup> The text had taken this shape as a result of certain amendments which had been adopted by the Assembly on the 26th September, 1934. The previous text, as far as it differs from the amended text, is shown in the following footnotes.

<sup>2</sup> The words 'one week' were absent from the original Rules of Procedure adopted by the Assembly at its first session.

<sup>3</sup> In the original version paragraph 2 ran as follows: 'Each representative shall, as soon as possible, and preferably before the opening of the session, present his credentials to the Secretary-General.'

<sup>4</sup> In the original version: 'A committee of eight members for the examination of the credentials shall be elected by the Assembly by secret ballot.'

<sup>5</sup> Professor Jèze was a French citizen holding a professorial chair in the University of Paris; and it was reported that Monsieur Blum's Government had threatened the professor with the forfeiture of his chair (which was a post in the French public service) if he were to insist on going to Geneva as a member of the Ethiopian delegation on this occasion.

advance to find the Ethiopian representatives' credentials invalid. The French and British authors of this intrigue seem to have been so sanguine as to have counted upon enlisting the requisite nine recruits without having to put down their own names; but by the 20th September these Franco-British hopes had been disappointed by a failure to find more than two candidates who were willing to serve on these exacting terms. The two obliging delegations were the Hungarian and the Peruvian. On the other hand, Monsieur Bourquin (Belgium)—who had been asked to serve as either chairman or *rapporteur* of the committee, in the expectation that he would prove as accommodating as his compatriot Monsieur van Zeeland<sup>1</sup>—declined to lend himself to these present Franco-British purposes; and a number of other delegations, including the Russian, likewise rebuffed MM. Eden and Delbos's advances. It proved impossible to find the makings of a committee except on the understanding that Great Britain and France should consent to serve and that the other volunteers should not have their hands tied. As a result of Anglo-French concessions on both these points, it was found possible, late on the evening of the 20th, to muster a set of nine states that were willing to accept nomination. These nine were France, Great Britain, Peru, the Soviet Union, the Netherlands, Czechoslovakia, New Zealand, Greece and Turkey; and among the six of these states which were not Great Powers, Peru was the only one that was prepared to play into the hands of Great Britain and France, while the other five—who by themselves would have commanded a majority—found in their Soviet Union colleague a leader in the policy of taking care to avoid the creation of any precedent which might afterwards be used against any other country in Abyssinia's plight.

As the nine candidates who had thus been mustered at the eleventh hour could not be constituted into a committee of the Assembly except by the Assembly's own act, the opening of the session on the morning of the 21st September saw the Abyssinian delegation take its place in the Assembly hall as was its right under the rules of procedure,<sup>2</sup> while the Italian delegation's place remained empty in virtue of the position which the Italian Government had chosen to take up. In the course of the same day the Emperor Haile Selassie himself arrived in Geneva from London by air.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 285, above.

<sup>2</sup> The Abyssinian delegation had a right to sit provisionally—unless the Assembly decided otherwise—even if objection had been taken to its admission; but as a matter of fact no official notification of objection to the Abyssinian delegation's presence was filed by any other state member at any stage of this session of the Assembly.

At the proceedings in the plenary session of the Assembly on the 21st, the President communicated the list of nominees for the Credentials Committee which had been arranged on the previous evening; and the Ethiopian delegation asked that the names should not be put up for acceptance *en bloc*, but should be voted upon individually by secret ballot, which was the alternative form of procedure that the Assembly was at liberty to follow. The nine candidates were duly elected, and on the afternoon of the same day Monsieur Politis, who had been appointed *rapporteur*, informed the Assembly that the committee, as a result of its first meeting, had come to the conclusion that the status of the delegation which had presented itself in the Emperor Haile Selassie's name called for further examination. On this ground Monsieur Politis requested, and the Assembly agreed, that the credentials of other delegations should be accepted, while those of the Emperor's delegation should be reserved for a later report.

The committee's unreadiness at this first meeting to fall in with the Franco-British desire that the Abyssinian delegation's credentials should be declared invalid appears to have flowed from a combination of considerations. While six states out of the nine which were serving shrank from creating a precedent which might one day prove prejudicial to themselves, all nine seem to have been moved by the tactical consideration that a recommendation to the Assembly in a sense unfavourable to the Abyssinian delegation would certainly be parried, on the Abyssinian side, by a request that the question should be referred to the Permanent Court of International Justice for an advisory opinion—a request which the Assembly could hardly refuse, while the acceptance of it would ensure that the investigation would be protracted long enough to allow the Abyssinian delegation to exercise its privilege of sitting provisionally until the end of the current session of the Assembly. The representatives of the small states on the committee, headed by Mijnheer Limburg (Netherlands), appear to have put forward the opinion that a reference to the Court was the course which the committee itself ought to recommend, and on the 23rd the committee appointed a sub-committee of jurists to advise them in this matter. The jurists appear to have informed the committee that, if and while the question was under the consideration of the Court, the Assembly was at liberty either to let the Abyssinians continue to sit provisionally or alternatively to suspend them provisionally, just as the Assembly liked. The French and British representatives on the committee were reported to have suggested at this point that the committee might advise the Assembly

to suspend the Abyssinian delegation from taking part in the Assembly's proceedings, pending the receipt from The Hague of the advisory opinion that was perhaps to be asked for; but if this suggestion was really put forward, it was decisively rejected by a majority of the committee under the leadership of Monsieur Litvinov.

On the evening of the 23rd the Credentials Committee accordingly recommended 'that the Assembly should consider the credentials submitted by the Ethiopian delegation, despite the doubt as to their regularity, as sufficient to permit that delegation to sit at the present session' without prejudice to the future.

This recommendation was embodied in a report setting forth the considerations on which it was based. The committee pointed out that on the one hand the credentials of the Ethiopian delegation were derived from the same authority as on previous occasions, but that on the other hand the situation had changed since then in various respects.

The seat of Government [was] no longer in the capital. According to some of the documents submitted a Governmental authority [was] stated to be established in another part of the country. It [seemed] exceptionally difficult to judge of the nature and extent of the power of that authority, and of the strength of the connexions still existing between it and the head of the state. The question that accordingly presented itself to the Committee was whether the head of the state, from whom the credentials under examination emanated, was exercising his legal title effectively enough to make those credentials perfectly in order. The question seemed to the committee an extremely delicate one. No member suggested that it should be settled in the negative and that the credentials in question should accordingly be declared to be manifestly not in order. None the less, all the members of the committee felt some doubt whether they really were in order.

The report went on to mention that the committee had considered the idea of asking for an advisory opinion from The Hague, but had rejected it because it would be practically impossible to obtain an opinion before the Assembly had concluded its session.

On these grounds the Credentials Committee made to the Assembly the recommendation above mentioned; and this recommendation was dealt with by putting the report as a whole to the vote. Out of forty-nine delegations voting, thirty-nine declared themselves in favour of the adoption of the report; six (Bulgaria, Panamá, Portugal, Siam, Switzerland and Venezuela) abstained from voting; and four (Albania, Austria, Hungary and Ecuador) voted against the report.

Thus, during this seventeenth session of the Assembly, the Ethiopian delegation was allowed to retain its seat—though this without any assurance of ever being allowed to sit again—while no Italian delegation presented itself to embarrass the Credentials Committee with the question whether the guarantees given by Italy of her ‘sincere intention to observe’ her ‘international obligations’ were still to be regarded as ‘effective’.



# APPENDIX

## CHRONOLOGY OF THE ITALO-ABYSSINIAN CONFLICT

- 1934, Dec. 5. Fighting broke out between Abyssinian and Italian troops at Walwal on the borders of Abyssinia and Italian Somaliland. Dec. 8, Italian representative at Addis Ababa presented protest to Abyssinian Government. Dec. 9, Abyssinian Government proposed that dispute should be submitted to arbitration. Dec. 11, Italian note demanding compensation presented to Abyssinian Government. Dec. 14, further Italian note repeating demands and rejecting proposal for arbitration. Abyssinia reported incident to League Council. Dec. 16, Italian communication sent to League.
- 1935, Jan. 3. Abyssinian Government asked League to take action under Art. 11 of Covenant.
- Jan. 10. General de Bono appointed High Commissioner for Eritrea and Somaliland.
- Jan. 15. Abyssinian memorandum forwarded to League Council.
- Jan. 19. League Council adjourned consideration of the dispute till its next session, having taken note of letters from Italian and Abyssinian representatives declaring that they would avoid further incidents and seek a settlement in accordance with the treaty of Aug. 2, 1928.
- Feb. 5-11. Italian Government called up reserves of Peloritana and Gavinnana divisions. Feb. 10, first battalion of Blackshirts embarked for East Africa. Feb. 23, first detachments of regular troops embarked.
- March 7. General Graziani appointed to command of forces in Somaliland.
- March 8. Abyssinian note to Italy requesting a settlement by arbitration and drawing attention to despatch of Italian reinforcements. March 18, Italian Government replied.
- March 13. *Procès-verbal* signed at Addis Ababa fixing neutral zone in Ogaden.
- March 17. Abyssinian Government referred dispute to League of Nations under Art. 15 of Covenant, at the same time calling attention to Italian military preparations. March 22, Italian note addressed to League denying that preparations were being made for aggression or that Art. 15 was applicable to the dispute, but consenting to the appointment of an arbitration commission. March 29, Abyssinian note to League urging that the dispute, together with the whole question of the Italo-Abyssinian frontier, should be submitted to arbitration within thirty days, and that no military preparations should be made while the case was being heard.
- April 3. Abyssinian Government asked League Council to consider dispute at its forthcoming extraordinary session. April 15, Council decided to postpone discussion till May.

- April 14. Italian Government informed Abyssinian Government that they were prepared to make arrangements for arbitration. April 17, Abyssinian Government replied insisting that arbitrators must deal with whole question of frontier as well as with Walwal and other incidents.
- May 7. Statement of policy made by Signor Lessona, Under-Secretary for the Colonies, in Italian Chamber of Deputies.
- May 11, 20 and 22. Further complaints from Abyssinian Government to League Council regarding Italian Government's warlike preparations and the Italian attitude towards the composition and terms of reference of the Arbitration Commission.
- May 21. Decree issued in Rome ordering that holdings of foreign investments must be deposited with the Bank of Italy.
- May 25. Speech by Signor Mussolini in Italian Chamber of Deputies on readiness to assume supreme responsibilities in defence of Italian soldiers and Italian territory.
- May 25. League Council adopted two resolutions as to arbitral procedure, by which frontier incidents since Dec. 5, 1934, were to be submitted to arbitration and Italy withdrew her objections to the Abyssinian Government's arbitrators.
- June 6-7. Preliminary meeting of Conciliation and Arbitration Commission.
- June 7. Statement made by Mr. Eden in House of Commons.
- June 8 and 11. Signor Mussolini delivered patriotic orations at Caghari and Sassari.
- June 15. Italian decree published withdrawing silver coins from circulation.
- June 19. Abyssinian Government sent protest to League regarding Italian press campaign and despatch of troops and material to East Africa. They also suggested that the Council should send neutral observers to frontier districts.
- June 24-6. Mr. Eden visited Rome and put forward proposals for settlement involving an exchange of territories. July 1, Mr. Eden reported on Zeila offer in House of Commons.
- June 25. Commission of Conciliation and Arbitration began work at Scheveningen; it suspended its sittings on July 9 because the arbitrators could not agree whether or not to examine the question of the ownership of Walwal. July 9, interim awards of Commission transmitted to League.
- June 30. Italian revenue and expenditure figures for 1934-5 showed a deficit of 2,030,000,000 lire, 975,000,000 lire being accounted for by expenditure in East Africa.
- July 3. Emperor Haile Selassie asked U.S. Government to examine means for securing the observance of the Briand-Kellogg Pact. July 5, U.S. Government virtually rejected this request.
- July 6. Speech by Signor Mussolini at Eboli regarding the irrevocable decision taken by the 'revolutionary people of Italy'.
- July 11. Statement by Sir Samuel Hoare in House of Commons.
- July 15. Mobilization of two more Italian divisions.
- July 18. Declaration of policy by Emperor Haile Selassie before the Assembly of Notables in Addis Ababa.

- July 22. Italian Government suspended decree of 1927 fixing Bank of Italy's gold reserve at 40 per cent. of note issue.
- July 25. British Government announced that licences would be withheld for the export of arms either to Abyssinia or to Italy.
- July 31-Aug. 3 Extraordinary session of League Council. It was decided that the question of the ownership of Walwal was not within the competence of the Commission on Arbitration. The members of the Commission were to designate a fifth arbitrator without delay. Council to meet again 'in any event' on Sept. 4 to examine situation.
- Aug. 1. Representatives of the British, French and Italian Governments, having met at Geneva as signatories of the treaty of Dec. 30, 1906, agreed to open conversations with regard to the dispute.
- Aug. 1. Statement made by Sir Samuel Hoare in House of Commons.
- Aug. 1. Decree came into force in Italy establishing official monopoly for purchases from abroad of certain raw materials.
- Aug. 7. U.S. Export-Import Bank refused credits for export of munitions.
- Aug. 12. Abyssinia appealed to League for removal of restrictions on the supply of arms.
- Aug. 15. 150,000 Italians ordered to report for service by the end of September.
- Aug. 15-18. Three-Power Conference held in Paris. Italian Government rejected Anglo-French proposals.
- Aug. 19. Commission of Conciliation and Arbitration resumed work. M. Politis was appointed as the fifth arbitrator. Sept. 3, Commission decided unanimously that the Italian Government and their agents on the spot could not be held responsible for the Walwal incident, while it had not been shown that the local Abyssinian authorities could be held responsible either.
- Aug. 22. British Cabinet decided to maintain embargo on arms export pending further negotiations.
- Aug. 23. Italian Government announced additional expenditure of 2,500,000,000 lire for extraordinary requirements in the colonies.
- Aug. 28. Emergency meeting of Italian Cabinet at Bolzano. Decrees issued regarding conversion of foreign securities, taxation and other measures of economy.
- Aug. 29. British Mediterranean Fleet left Malta for the Eastern Mediterranean and was afterwards stationed at Alexandria where, during the first half of September, it was reinforced by a large part of the Home Fleet.
- Aug. 30. Oil concession reported to have been granted by Emperor Haile Selassie to Mr. F. W. Rickett on behalf of an American company.
- Sept. 3. Standard-Vacuum Oil Co. agreed, on the advice of the U.S. Department of State, to terminate the concession.
- Aug. 31. President Roosevelt signed joint resolution of Congress on arms embargo. Sept. 25, issue of schedule of arms and munitions to be subject to embargo.
- Sept. 4. Italian memorandum on conditions in Abyssinia presented to League of Nations.

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- Sept. 4-6. Further meeting of League Council, which appointed a Committee of Five to seek a peaceful solution for the problem as a whole.
- Sept 10 French Ambassador in London made inquiries regarding British attitude towards sanctions in the event of a resort to force in Europe Sept. 26, British Government replied.
- Sept. 10 Conversation between M. Laval, Sir Samuel Hoare and Mr. Eden at Geneva.
- Sept 11-14 Speeches made by Sir Samuel Hoare, M. Laval and other statesmen during general discussion by League Assembly
- Sept 14. *Communiqué* issued after meeting of Italian Cabinet to the effect that the Italo-Abyssinian problem did not admit of any compromise and that Italian defences in Libya were being reinforced.
- Sept. 18. Committee of Five laid its proposals before the representatives of Abyssinia and Italy. Sept 22, Baron Aloisi informed Chairman of Committee that the Italian Government rejected the proposals.
- Sept. 23, Abyssinian Government accepted proposals as a basis for negotiation.
- Sept. 20. The British Ambassador in Rome, Sir Eric Drummond, gave Signor Suvich assurances regarding British military and naval preparations in the Mediterranean and received similar assurances from him.
- Sept 20 Ratio of Bank of Italy's gold reserve to notes and sight liabilities fell to under 30 per cent
- Sept. 24. Sir Samuel Hoare asked French Ambassador what support Great Britain would receive from France in the event of an attack before Art. 16 of the Covenant became applicable. Oct. 5, French Government replied.
- Sept. 25. Emperor Haile Selassie informed League that Abyssinian troops had been withdrawn thirty kilometres from the frontier several months previously. He again asked for impartial observers to be sent.
- Sept. 26. League Council considered report of Committee of Five and appointed a Committee of Thirteen to draft the report provided for by Art. 15, paragraph 4, of the Covenant
- Sept. 29. Emperor Haile Selassie signed order for general mobilization.
- Oct. 2. 'National mobilization' took place in Italy. Manifesto issued by Signor Mussolini Emperor Haile Selassie protested to League against Italian violation of Abyssinian territory at Mussa Ali.
- Oct. 3 Italian forces crossed river Mareb, and occupied Addi Grat on Oct. 4 and Adowa on Oct. 6.
- Oct. 4 Italian Ambassador in London proposed that the British and Italian Governments should cancel their respective precautions in the Mediterranean.
- Oct. 5. President Roosevelt issued proclamations bringing arms embargo into force against both Italy and Abyssinia, and warning U.S. citizens not to travel in ships belonging to belligerents.
- Oct. 5. League Council discussed report of Committee of Thirteen and appointed Committee of Six to report on situation. This Committee met on Oct 5-6 and came to the conclusion that Italy had resorted to war in disregard of her covenants under Art. 12 of the Covenant.
- Oct. 7, Council unanimously adopted reports of Committee of Thirteen and Committee of Six, the Italian representative dissenting.

- Oct. 9-11. The Assembly met again. The delegates of 50 out of the 54 states represented acquiesced in the findings of the Council. The Assembly also set up a Committee to co-ordinate the measures which its members might prepare to take under Art. 16.
- Oct. 10. First meeting of Co-ordination Committee. It appointed a smaller committee (the Committee of Eighteen), which held its first session on Oct. 11-19 and drafted five proposals regarding the arms embargo, financial measures and economic sanctions
- Oct. 12. M. Laval stated that Franco-British collaboration would be exercised in the interests of peace. Conciliation was an important function of the League
- Oct. 14. British Government made inquiries of French Government regarding mutual support in the Mediterranean. Oct. 18, French Government replied
- Oct. 15. Axum surrendered to Italians.
- Oct. 18. Further assurances given by British Ambassador in Rome regarding measures taken in Mediterranean
- Oct. 19. Co-ordination Committee adopted five proposals drafted by Committee of Eighteen and communicated them to members of the League and other states
- Oct. 22 and 23. Statements by Sir Samuel Hoare and Mr. Eden in House of Commons.
- Oct. 23. Statement by M. Laval before Foreign Affairs Commission of French Chamber.
- Oct. 26. U.S. Government replied to Co-ordination Committee's communication on sanctions.
- Oct. 29. French and British experts reported to have drafted peace proposals.
- Oct. 30. Discussions took place on Oct. 30 and Nov. 5 and 12 between Sir Eric Drummond and Signor Mussolini regarding reduction of forces in the Mediterranean
- Oct. 30. President Roosevelt issued statement regarding trade with belligerents.
- Oct. 31-Nov. 2. Committee of Eighteen met to consider the execution of its five proposals. Nov. 2, Dr. Riddell, the Canadian delegate, proposed that the embargo should be extended to oil, coal, iron and steel (Proposal No. 4A).
- Nov. 1. M. Laval had conversations with Baron Aloisi and Sir Samuel Hoare at Geneva.
- Nov. 2. Meeting of Co-ordination Committee, which took note of a suggestion from M. van Zeeland that the French and British Governments should be entrusted with a mission of conciliation.
- Nov. 6. Committee of Eighteen adopted Proposal No. 4A in principle.
- Nov. 6. German Consul-General at Geneva informed League Secretariat that his Government intended to prevent profiteering arising out of trade with belligerents.
- Nov. 7. Italian army occupied Gorahai on southern front.
- Nov. 8. Italian army occupied Makalle on northern front.
- Nov. 11. Abyssinian counter-attack on southern front followed by Italian withdrawal.

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- Nov. 11. Italian Government addressed protest to all sanction-taking states. Nov. 19, French reply. Nov. 22, British reply.
- Nov. 15. Mr. Cordell Hull stated that the export of certain commodities to belligerents was contrary to the policy of the U.S. Government.
- Nov. 16. Marshal Badoglio appointed to succeed General de Bono as Commander-in-Chief and High Commissioner for Eritrea and Somaliland.
- Nov. 17. Fascist Grand Council adopted resolution with regard to sanctions.
- Nov. 18. Economic sanctions (proposals 2-4) came into force against Italy.
- Nov. 19. Italian decree issued establishing monopoly in purchase of gold from abroad.
- Nov. 21. U.S. Federal Oil Administrator asked oil industry in U.S.A. to suspend shipments to Italy. Nov. 22, Mr. Hull declared that the Administration might be forced to conclude that certain commodities were essential war materials.
- Nov. 21. Franco-British experts resumed discussion of peace plan.
- Nov. 27. M. Laval broadcast a statement on French foreign policy.
- Nov. 27-30 and Dec. 10-12. Meeting of experts appointed to study information supplied by Governments as to the application of sanctions.
- Nov. 28. Egyptian Government published decree on application of sanctions.
- Nov. 28. Marshal Badoglio took over command in East Africa.
- Nov. 29. Meeting of Committee of Eighteen postponed from Nov. 29 till Dec. 12 at M. Laval's request.
- Nov. 30. Conversation between M. Laval and Italian Ambassador in Paris. Reported declaration by Italian Government that oil sanction would be regarded as unfriendly act.
- Dec. 5. Statement by Sir Samuel Hoare in House of Commons.
- Dec. 6. Statement by Signor Mussolini in Chamber of Deputies at Rome.
- Dec. 7-8. Sir Samuel Hoare visited Paris and agreed upon draft of peace plan with M. Laval.
- Dec. 8. Italian army occupied Abbi Addi on northern front.
- Dec. 9. Laval-Hoare Peace Plan published in French press. Dec. 10, Plan discussed in House of Commons. Dec. 11, Plan formally communicated to Italy; Abyssinian Legation in Paris issued statement regarding it. Dec. 12, Plan communicated to Emperor of Abyssinia; Abyssinian declaration addressed to League. Dec. 12-13, meeting of Committee of Eighteen. Dec. 13, Plan communicated to Council.
- Dec. 16, Protest by Emperor.
- Dec. 15-17. Abyssinian counter-attacks on Takazye river on northern front.
- Dec. 17. Statement by M. Laval in French Chamber of Deputies.
- Dec. 18. Rejection of the Peace Plan by Signor Mussolini in a speech delivered at Pontinia. Abyssinia addressed another declaration to League followed by notes to France and Great Britain. Resignation of Sir Samuel Hoare.
- Dec. 18-19. Meeting of League Council; Peace Plan abandoned.
- Dec. 19. Statement by Sir Samuel Hoare in House of Commons. Meeting of Committee of Eighteen.

- Dec. 22. Mr. Eden appointed Foreign Secretary.
- Dec. 22. Abyssinians reoccupied Abbi Addi.
- Dec. 27-8. Debate in French Chamber of Deputies. M. Laval escaped defeat.
- Dec. 30. Italian airmen bombed Swedish Red Cross unit.

- 1936, Jan. 3. Emperor Haile Selassie proposed that League should send a commission to inquire into both belligerents' methods of waging war.
- Jan. 3. Pittman-McReynolds Neutrality Bill introduced in both Houses of U.S. Congress. Jan. 5, Nye Bill introduced.
- Jan. 12. Beginning of Italian advance in south-west which resulted in the defeat of Ras Desta's forces. Jan. 20, Italians reached Negelli
- Jan. 19-23. Battle in Tembyen on northern front.
- Jan. 20. Abyssinian declaration forwarded to League asking for financial assistance and the imposition of more effective sanctions.
- Jan. 20. Committee of Thirteen drew up report which was adopted by Council on Jan. 23.
- Jan. 22. Committee of Eighteen appointed Committee of Experts on the Trade in and Transport of Petroleum and its Derivatives.
- Jan. 22. Letters addressed to Chairman of Co-ordination Committee by representatives of Czechoslovakia, France, Great Britain, Greece, Jugoslavia, Rumania and Turkey concerning recent negotiations with regard to mutual support in the Mediterranean. Jan. 24, Similar letter from Spain.
- Jan. 24. Italian *notes verbales* presented to 51 sanction-taking states regarding British memorandum of Jan. 22 as to mutual support under Art. 16.
- Feb. 1. Article by Signor Mussolini in *Popolo d'Italia* on the connexion between sanctions and war.
- Feb. 3-12. Committee of Experts on the Trade in and Transport of Petroleum and its Derivatives met. Feb. 12, Report issued.
- Feb. 5. Fascist Grand Council passed resolution in favour of direct control of foreign trade by the state.
- Feb. 11-15. On northern front, Italians defeated Ras Mulugeta's army at Amba Aradam.
- Feb. 24. Debate in House of Commons.
- Feb. 27-9. Italian forces drove Ras Kassa and Ras Seyyum out of the Tembyen.
- Feb. 28. Italians occupied Amba Alagi on northern front.
- Feb. 29. President Roosevelt signed resolution amending resolution of Aug. 31, 1935, on arms embargo and neutrality and extending it till May 1, 1937.
- March 1. President Roosevelt urged American exporters not to increase trade with belligerents above peace-time level.
- March 1. Beginning of Battle of Southern Shire on northern front, resulting in defeat of Ras Imru and Dejazmach Ayelu.
- March 2. Signor Bova Scoppa, head of Italian delegation to the League, made representations to M. Flandin concerning the oil sanction. Conversation between M. Flandin and Mr. Eden. Committee of Eighteen discussed oil sanction and M. Flandin's proposal for mediation.

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- March 3 Committee of Thirteen appealed to both belligerents to open negotiations for the cessation of hostilities. March 5, Abyssinian acceptance March 8, Italian agreement in principle
- March 3 Italian Council of Ministers decided to nationalize banks.
- March 3, 4 and 5. Italian airmen bombed British Red Cross Ambulance.
- March 7. German Government denounced the Treaty of Locarno and proclaimed the remilitarization of the Rhineland
- March 7. Committee of Petroleum Experts met and issued second report on imposition of oil embargo.
- March 20. Abyssinian communication to League asking for effective help and stipulating that negotiations must be carried on in the spirit of the Covenant March 21, Abyssinian protest to League regarding gas attacks on civilians.
- March 23. Signor Mussolini announced plan for nationalization of industry.
- March 23. Committee of Thirteen instructed its Chairman, Señor de Madariaga, to get into touch with both parties in preparation for negotiations Señor de Madariaga approached the Italian Government with regard to Abyssinian complaints of atrocities March 27, Señor de Madariaga asked Italian Government to send a delegate to Geneva.
- March 31–April 4 Emperor Haile Selassie defeated at Lake Ashangi.
- April 1 Gondar occupied by Italian troops
- April 1. Abyssinian note to League, asking once more for assistance
- April 2 Italian Government invited Señor de Madariaga to come to Rome April 3, Italian Government answered Señor de Madariaga's letter of March 23 concerning atrocities.
- April 4. Committee of Thirteen issued interim report.
- April 4. Ecuador abandoned sanctions
- April 5. Italian troops entered Kworam.
- April 7. A supreme appeal from the Emperor Haile Selassie to the League of Nations was received at Geneva.
- April 8. British memorandum on Italian use of poison gas circulated to Committee of Thirteen
- April 8–10. Committee of Thirteen discussed atrocities and mediation.
- April 12. Italian troops reached Lake Tana.
- April 14–17. Abyssinians driven back on southern front by Italians advancing towards Harrar.
- April 15. Italian troops entered Dessye.
- April 15. Baron Aloisi met Señor de Madariaga at Geneva and made proposals which were rejected by the Abyssinian delegation.
- April 16–18. Meeting of Committee of Thirteen. Apr. 18, Report signed.
- April 20. Meeting of Council.
- April 23–5. On southern front Italians attacked 'Hindenburg Line' defending road to Harrar. They took Daggah Modo on April 23, Sasa Baneh on April 29 and Daggah Bur on April 30.
- April 30. Emperor Haile Selassie returned to Addis Ababa.
- May 2. The Emperor renounced the direction of affairs and left for Djibouti. He left Djibouti in a British warship on May 4 and reached Jerusalem on May 8.
- May 5. Marshal Badoglio's forces entered Addis Ababa. A national rally was held in Italy and Signor Mussolini declared that the war was finished.



- May 6. Debate in House of Commons Speech by Sir Samuel Hoare at Caxton Hall
- May 7. General Graziani's troops entered Jigjiga on May 7 and Harrar on May 8, and made contact with troops from northern front at Dire Dawa on May 9
- May 9. Italian Government issued decree annexing Abyssinia to Italy and investing King of Italy with title of Emperor May 10, Marshal Badoglio appointed Governor-General of Ethiopia and Viceroy
- May 9-10. Conference of smaller states (Denmark, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland) at Geneva.
- May 10. Telegram addressed to League by Emperor Haile Selassie from Jerusalem May 11, Abyssinian representative at Geneva presented note to League
- May 11-13 Meeting of League Council Resolution adopted postponing next meeting until after June 15 and maintaining existing sanctions in the meantime.
- May 28. Signor Grandi delivered a conciliatory message from Signor Mussolini to Mr Eden. May 29/June 1, conversations in Rome between Signor Suvich and Sir Eric Drummond.
- June 1 Italian Decree Law for organization and administration of Italian East Africa.
- June 2. Argentina requested convocation of special League Assembly to consider question of sanctions.
- June 10. Mr. Neville Chamberlain, speaking at a dinner given by the 1900 Club, declared that it would be 'midsummer madness' to maintain or intensify sanctions June 11, statement in House of Commons by Mr. Baldwin with regard to Mr. Chamberlain's 'provisional reflections'.
- June 12. General Hertzog declared in the House of Assembly at Capetown that the South African Government wished sanctions to be maintained.
- June 18. Debate in House of Commons Mr. Eden announced that the British Government would recommend the abandonment of sanctions.
- June 18. Australian and Canadian Prime Ministers made declarations in favour of abolishing sanctions.
- June 19. French Government decided to support abandonment of sanctions. June 23, declaration of French policy by M. Blum.
- June 20. Speech by Mr. Baldwin at Wishaw reviewing British policy throughout dispute.
- June 20. President Roosevelt issued proclamation raising embargo on export of arms to Abyssinia and Italy.
- June 23. Debate in House of Commons.
- June 23. Haiti abandoned sanctions.
- June 26. Meeting of League Council.
- June 26. Poland abandoned sanctions.
- June 27. Communication addressed to states members of League by Ras Nasibu on behalf of Emperor.
- June 29. Italian note of June 19 laid before President of Assembly.
- June 30-July 4. Meeting of Assembly. July 3, Emperor Haile Selassie proposed two resolutions. Mexico announced abstention from Assembly proceedings. July 4, M. van Zeeland presented draft text

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to Assembly regarding withdrawal of sanctions, non-recognition of annexation and suggestions for reform of League. The draft was adopted by 44 votes to 1 (Abyssinia) with 4 abstentions (Chile, Mexico, Panamá and South Africa). The second Abyssinian resolution, providing for financial assistance, was put to the vote and lost by 23 votes to 1 with 25 abstentions.

July 6. Co-ordination Committee recommended that sanctions should cease to be applied as from July 15.

July 7. Italian annexation of Abyssinia recognized by San Marino.

July 9. Sir Samuel Hoare stated that British warships which had been sent to the Mediterranean from other stations would be released at an early date.

July 15. Italian Government announced that their forces in Libya would shortly be reduced. Signor Mussolini celebrated the end of sanctions by a speech from the Palazzo Venezia in Rome.

July 27. Liquidation of arrangements for mutual assistance in Mediterranean announced by Mr. Eden.

Sept. 23. Seventeenth session of League Assembly adopted report of its Credentials Committee recommending that the Abyssinian delegates should retain their seats in the Assembly during the current session. Sept. 30, final appeal by Abyssinian delegate.

Sept. 26. Letter from Mr. Eden communicated to States Members of League regarding request from Galla chiefs for British mandate and disorders in Jimma. Sept. 28. British consulate at Gore closed.

Oct. 24. Italian annexation of Abyssinia recognized by Germany.

Nov. 12. Annexation of Abyssinia recognized by Austria and Hungary.

### MINISTERIAL CHANGES IN GREAT BRITAIN AND FRANCE, 1935-6.

#### UNITED KINGDOM:

<i>(January)</i> —June 7, 1935.	Prime Minister:	Rt. Hon. J. Ramsay MacDonald.
“ “	Lord President of the Council:	Rt. Hon. Stanley Baldwin.
“ “	Foreign Secretary:	Rt. Hon. Sir John Simon.
“ “	Lord Privy Seal:	Rt. Hon. Anthony Eden.
June 7—December 19, 1935.	Prime Minister:	Rt. Hon. Stanley Baldwin.
“ “	Foreign Secretary:	Rt. Hon. Sir Samuel Hoare.
“ “	Minister for League Affairs:	Rt. Hon. Anthony Eden.
December 22, 1935—	Foreign Secretary:	Rt. Hon. Anthony Eden.
June 5, 1936—	First Lord of the Admiralty:	Rt. Hon. Sir Samuel Hoare.

#### FRANCE:

<i>(January)</i> —May 31, 1935.	Prime Minister:	M. Flandin.
“ “	Foreign Minister:	M. Laval.
June 7, “ 1935—January 22, 1936.	Prime Minister:	} M. Laval.
“ “	Foreign Minister:	
January 24—June 4, 1936.	Prime Minister:	M. Sarraut.
“ “	Foreign Minister:	M. Flandin.
June 4, 1936—	Prime Minister:	M. Blum.
“ “	Foreign Minister:	M. Delbos.

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